

Response to Intervention:  
A Focus on the Struggling Reader

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Dr. Gordon Martinen  
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FACULTY APPROVAL

Response to Intervention:

A Focus on the Struggling Reader

Approved for the Faculty

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## ABSTRACT

The Response to Intervention (RTI) model created a philosophy and program of identifying struggling readers by using quick diagnostic tools such as an Oral Reading Fluency test (ORF). Students who show reading proficiency in fluency attended regular Language Arts classes. Students who scored below the 50% but above the 25% were assigned an additional reading lab which focused on areas of improvement in reading along with a regular Language Arts class. Students who scored below the 25% were given two additional reading labs as well as a regular Language Arts class. The data has shown that the model was effective by increasing reading fluency in most students.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Response to Intervention

#### Background for Project

In 1816 Thomas Jefferson said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." (NCLB, 2002) A nation composed of all literate and educated citizens has never existed, and may never exist. However, an effort has been made to increase the amount of achievement level in student reading proficiency.

The United States education system has been under scrutiny over the past few decades. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan addressed the country with a Nation at Risk, an in-depth look at the failing educational system stating, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war," (MacPherson, 2003). Since then, many presidents strived to improve education. Most recently President George W. Bush

presented the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that ordered schools across the country to create educational equality across the board. In a foreword to Congress President Bush stated:

The quality of our public schools directly affects us all as parents, as students, and as citizens. Yet too many children in America are segregated by low expectations, illiteracy, and self-doubt. In a constantly changing world that is demanding increasingly complex skills from its workforce, children are literally being left behind. (Bush, 2002)

President Bush highlighted the fact that the nation's students have been segregated by illiteracy, the most vital and key component of education. The NCLB act caused states, districts, and educators across the nation to increase their efforts to raise literacy rates.

To meet these expectations set by the President, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) came together in an attempt to discover a model

that would assist all students, from all reading levels, in becoming proficient readers. The model they discovered was referred to as the Response to Intervention (RTI) model.

In 2006 the Ocean Beach School District adopted the RTI model. This concept focused on students with low reading skills and recommended these students receive intensive reading training, which consequently closed the gap between their reading deficiency and grade level.

#### Statement of the Problem

Ilwaco Middle School students have shown high reading scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), but all students were not proficient in the content area of reading. Consequently, many students were not reading at grade level. The NCLB federal requirements have directed schools to meet all students' needs. In order to reach all students, Ilwaco Middle School adopted the RTI model to meet students needs.

### Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTI model and the use of the AIMSWeb database to monitor student progress. The author evaluated whether increased reading instruction increased student reading proficiency.

### Delimitations

The study was held in Ilwaco Middle School located in Ilwaco, WA. The researcher conducted the study during the 2006-2007 school year. The students monitored were seventh and eighth grade students. Students were placed in reading groups according to their performance on an Oral Reading Fluency Test. Students who read at grade level were referred to as the core group, those in need of extra help were referred to as strategic, and those who presented very low reading skills were referred to as intensive.

The students who qualified for the core group in both seventh and eighth grade were representative of the population that contained a higher number of students. The core group was comprised of 57% of the

eighth graders and 50% of the seventh graders at the middle school. Students in the strategic group became less represented due to the number of students participating, about 21.5% of the eighth graders and 30% in the seventh graders. Lastly, the intensive group was the least represented of the population due to an even smaller number of students placed, 21.5% in the eighth grade and 20% in the seventh. Due to the low number of students in the strategic and intensive groups the results were limited.

#### Assumptions

The researcher assumed that all students participating in this study came to school ready to learn and ready to become better readers. The students also acquired adequate sleep, had an appropriate amount of calories, and had received sufficient moral support from home. Another assumption was that past trainings attended by instructors qualified them to teach effectively each day. It was also assumed that teachers came prepared to successfully teach each day.

All materials in this study were assumed to be grade level appropriate and suitable for all students varying in reading proficiency levels. The author recognized that throughout the school year the reading curriculum increased in difficulty to assure natural reading progression amongst students and overall skill and competency.

### Hypothesis

To address and recognize the varying performance levels of students at Ilwaco Middle School, a team of highly qualified personnel administered a diagnostic tool called an Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) test to generate a placement score. Based on the student score they were placed in appropriate reading classes. Students who scored above the 50% of grade level were placed in the core group and received grade level course work. Students who tested below 50% of grade level in reading received an extra reading lab/s in addition to the regular course work and found a greater change in their reading fluency compared to those in the core group.

### Significance of the Project

The research that has been conducted has served as an outline for whether or not the program held significance in improving students with low reading abilities. Those students performing below grade level were in desperate need of assistance and required help above and beyond the regular course work. In addition, improved reading abilities and reading fluency showed an increase in WASL scores in all areas, along with a greater understanding of subject matter in general.

### Procedure

All students in the seventh and eighth grade were given an ORF test in the beginning of the school year. Students who provided evidence through the ORF test scores that they could read at grade level, were given standard reading classes. Students who demonstrated that they did not read at grade level were given the standard reading classes as well as an extra reading lab throughout the year. These reading labs assisted students in reading and improved their reading scores.



Those students who demonstrated a reading ability drastically below grade level received the standard reading class, an intensive reading lab, and a standard reading lab.

All students were tested three times throughout the school year. The first ORF test was in September, the second occurred in January, and the third occurred in early June. All ORF test scores were entered into the AIMSweb database and were analyzed to appropriate instruction for each student. Classes were adjusted throughout the school year to meet individual student needs and progress.

#### Acronyms

AYP. Adequate Yearly Progress

CBM. Curriculum-Based Measurement

ELL. English Language Learners

IDEA. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

OBSD. Ocean Beach School District

OSPI. Office of Superintendent of Public

Instruction

ODD. Oppositional Defiance Disorder

ORF. Oral Reading Fluency

RTI. Response to Intervention

SLP. Student Learning Plan

WASL. Washington Assessment of Student Learning

WPM. Words per Minute

## CHAPTER 2

### Selected Literature; A focus on RTI

#### Introduction

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) caused many schools around the nation to reevaluate their reading curriculum. Schools restructured old programs to meet the new requirements of this act, with standardized testing as the focus. Washington state has used a standardized test called the WASL, which has helped the state to gather data on student performance. Schools across the state were expected to perform at a proficient level or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to avoid state interference.

No Child Left Behind put education under a microscope. Schools had to choose carefully when selecting programs to improve student test scores. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) noticed that the Response to Intervention (RTI) model recognized the varying levels of student ability, and helped place students in a specific category to meet their needs. Washington state and

the Ocean Beach School District (OBSD) have adopted this model to meet the NCLB's new requirements.

#### No Child Left Behind - High-Stakes Testing

In 2002, President George W. Bush enacted the NCLB Act that changed the face of education in the United States. The NCLB Act caused schools to become accountable for students who did not achieve in education. The NCLB Act was based on four main ideas: freedom for states, using proven methods, creating parental choices, and stronger accountability. Each idea placed pressure on schools, teachers, and students to perform in today's educational system. (Bush, 2006).

The NCLB Act extended budgeting freedom by allowing states and school districts to take up to 50% of their federal grant money and use it towards other funds/grants and/or programs that they saw fit. For example, if a Title I program was under funded in a district, the district could put federal dollars towards their Title I program without separate approval. Schools were given the opportunity to use

federal dollars to hire additional teachers if needed, increase teacher pay, and/or put the money towards professional development. (Bush, 2006).

The new bill required school districts to use scientifically tested programs that were researched and proven to be effective. For example, NCLB approved the Reading First program because it was deemed to be a researched and proven program, therefore federal dollars may go towards that particular program. Many programs were approved and in order for school districts to receive the federal dollars, the schools had to adopt one or more of the programs. The NCLB act only granted money to those schools that used effective teaching methods and programs. (Bush 2006).

Under the new law, parents were given the power to choose where their student attended school, if the student's current school was placed under a plan of improvement. Parents could have taken advantage of free tutoring or have chosen a neighboring school. If parents thought that their child's current school to

was unsafe, then they had the opportunity to relocate their child to a safer school.

Stronger accountability was put in place to "close the achievement gap, offer more flexibility, giving parents more options, and teaching students based on what works" (Bush, 2006). The accountability provisions focused on the achievement gap. The accountability measure provided all children an opportunity to learn. The Act required schools to release yearly report cards for state and school district's performance informing parents or related stockholders of their progress. If a school did not make performance based progress then the school was required to provide other services such as tutoring assistance and program correction. If AYP was not met within five years, the school would be required to undergo major educational change and possibly lose federal funding. (Bush, 2006)

High stakes testing has been the most common method used in gathering AYP data and has undergone scrutiny from many critics. Accusations of the high

stakes tests claimed that the tests were "doing grave damage to education and to the lives of children" (Neill, 2006). Neill agreed and understood the statement that "assessment is a necessary tool" (2006) but felt that NCLB's punishment method written in the accountability provisions did not solve the problems for those students and schools who had under-achieved. Many schools simply did not have the funds necessary to prepare students for a high-stakes test.

High-stakes testing has also been charged of not creating life long learners, but rather test takers. Hurren, Rutledge, and Garvin claimed "high-stakes testing is acting in opposition to, even inadvertently defeating, efforts of teachers to teach students in creative, and meaningful ways" (Hurren, 2006). Hurren, also adds that high-stakes testing has stripped educational creativity, which has added to student anxiety.

Various studies have shown that students who have high test anxiety will score lower on tests than those students who have lower test anxiety (Hurren, 2006).

This claim implied that high stakes testing does not test what the student knows but rather what they can regurgitate. The students who have high-test anxiety were typically being scored on a mechanism that did not coincide with their learning style. Many students lacked the ability to express their ideas through traditional testing but could through discussion, presentation, and other creative means. Simply stated some students proved to be better traditional test takers than others.

Weaver (2004) argued that teachers who have taught students with high stakes testing and benchmarks in a creative manner have produced life long learners. "The mentoring culture of teaching can address the high-stakes testing challenges of NCLB by voluntarily formalizing a collaborative process to fit each school" (Weaver, 2004). When teachers know the content and have taught the student using appropriate fashion, then students have achieved mastery at many levels.



High-stakes testing has provided measurable data which has informed schools on student performance. In order for teaching to be meaningful and informative teachers must be creative with their instruction (Weaver, 2004). Teachers should know their students personalities and needs. Finding ways for students to succeed on high-stake testing has proven a difficult task. "The culture of teaching honors children as the focus of learning, not the content... and certainly not the test" (Weaver, 2004). Weaver also suggested that teachers who have relationships established with students, undoubtedly has encouraged success in life, and on tests.

The NCLB Act has changed the face of education in the United States. The Act gave parents more options for their children education, placed strict guidelines and stiff penalties for failing schools, and created an expectation of performance. Stronger accountability measures may or may not have improved the educational system but has definitely changed the way the system ran.

## Response to Intervention

To meet the raised expectation of the national government, state agencies looked for programs that were easy and effective. The RTI model was one of the programs that OSPI endorsed and OBSD adopted. Response to Intervention was "evidence-based" (Strayer, 2006) and data driven; the RTI program had all the ingredients for a successful program.

The RTI model had a multi-tiered design which identified students by their ability in a given subject. The multiple tiers placed students into three groups: core, strategic, and intensive. Core students were defined as performing at grade level, strategic students slightly below grade level, and intensive students operating severely below grade level. Each student, depending on what their group placement, received instruction that accommodated their specific area of need. (Bergeson, 2006).

The basic premise of RTI was to provide extra assistance to those students who needed it, to close the achievement gap. For example, if a student was

labeled strategic, then they would have been given an extra class during the school day to make up for the information missed. To monitor the growth of each student periodic testing was done. This model referred to as "preventative intervention", or catching students up to grade level performance within the given school year (Strayer, 2006).

The most common application of the RTI model has been in reading, although RTI has worked in other subject areas. The RTI model was most frequently used in reading due to readings overall importance in all subject areas as well as the accumulated evidence to demonstrating its effectiveness.

The RTI model was commonly used on many at-risk youths with reading problems in the early literacy stages. The system was said to be "most effective for equalizing disparities among lower achieving and higher achieving children in their reading development" (Justice, 2006).

In order for the RTI model to be proven effective, the RTI model first needed to have a

measurable benchmark to be attained. Secondly, students needed to take a test that had the ability to measure the desired benchmark. Once students had taken the pre-test, their ability could be measured and students were placed in assisted groups to provide extra assistance (Gersten, 2006). To further identify the areas of need, students received a Student Learning Plan (SLP) (Bergeson, 2006). The SLP helped to outline the areas of assistance and the type of treatment that students received. An SLP also identified how and when a student met the desired benchmark.

Once the student was placed in their group, the treatment closely followed the student's SLP. Periodic testing was given to measure and monitor success, which provided educators with "evidence-based progress" (Justice, 2006) of the student. Instruction and treatment was modified as results continuously arrived. The goal of RTI was to "close the gap" (Justice, 2006) in learning deficiency by adding instruction not altering current instruction.

The RTI model allowed for educational institutions to provide the help needed for students before they qualified for special services (Gersten, 2006). In theory, RTI provided schools with the opportunity to lower the number of students who qualified for special education, especially in higher grades due to reading, writing, and math deficiencies. Schools were given the chance to utilize effective programs using the RTI model to meet the individual needs of all students.

With NCLB creating pressure for all school districts across the nation to meet the diverse needs of all students, the highly researched RTI model helped schools to identify students of need and provide them with necessary assistance. This intervention provided schools with measurable results. Using this system, schools provided the extra instruction to those students who normally would qualify for special services later in their school career.

## Classroom and Behavior

With passed legislation, education has become a data driven environment. Everything from student test scores, teacher professional development, and behavioral tendencies have been studied and analyzed. One item has remained constant throughout the years has been behavior in the classroom. Too often teachers have been stripped away from the instruction of other students in order to address behavioral problem in the classroom.

Many teachers have admitted that one of the driving problems in education has been student behavior in the classroom. Teachers have reported students increasingly being less respectful and insubordinate. Other problems that stood out to teachers were the use violence in schools and an increase in vulgar language (Abebe & Hailemarian, 2007). Experts have concluded that these problems have stemmed from many places; however few to none have argued that these types of behavior do not serve as a disruption in any classroom.

Research has shown that teachers have not properly been trained in classroom management techniques. Although more behavioral and emotional problems have become more relevant in the classroom Abebe & Hailemariam (2007) it has been discovered that teachers lack the necessary skills required to handle many behavioral situations. This shortcoming in skill has been associated with a lack of knowledge and training that teachers have received during teacher training (Abebe & Hailemariam, 2007). Abebe & Hailemariam (2007) have also found that many practices that teachers used with behaviorally disruptive students actually reinforced the negative behavior. By introducing punishments and negative re-enforcers, students did not curb their negative behavior but escalated it.

Parenting has been a major source of behavioral disorders amongst students. Students portrayed behaviors that they had witnessed at home which transcended into the classroom. A lack of support and a dislike of school and the educational process have

directly influenced students' willingness to take part constructively in class. "In addition to modeling and reinforcing behaviors, parents failed to support pro-social behaviors and academic achievement" (Abebe & Hailemariam, 2007).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) also required schools to fund and mainstream disabled students into the classroom. Included in these disabilities were students with behavioral and emotional disabilities who were placed in the classrooms which added too many of the frustrations that teachers experienced. "Teachers have not been trained properly to handle many of the problems associated with these types of disabilities" (Abebe & Hailemariam, 2007).

At the university level, disruptive students served as a major learning inhibitor for other students. This study has indefinitely supported its relevance in the K-12 setting. In a study conducted by Alan Seidman misbehavior was defined as any "behavior that is considered inappropriate for the



setting or situation in which it occurs" (Seidman, 2005). Acts such as aggression, immortality, defiance of authority, class disruptions, and all-round goofing off posed a major obstacle for instructors to deal with.

Surveys indicated that students felt as if fellow students misbehavior limited their resources and time (Seidman, 2005). Often instructors did not intend to deal with disciplinarian issues when pursuing a teaching career. Teachers reported to be afraid to deal with issues in class due to a lack of administrative backing and because it may be perceived as incompetence on the instructors behalf. Ignoring the issue has not proven to decrease the amount of behavioral problems.

Student misbehavior can serve as an overall distraction or a "learning killer" and has shown to negatively effect student retention (Seidman, 2005). This problem raised awareness towards the overall impact of the problem. The close ties to Seidman's (2005) survey and study results had direct

implications on the K-12 model. Students were allowed to perform these disruptive behaviors elsewhere before going to the university level. Although this disruptive behavior and study was at the university level it has direct implications to the K-12 model.

Defiance has also shown to be a major source of discipline referrals in the public education system (Gregory, 2005). Defiance and other disruptive behavior have shown to hinder the instructional process. Misbehavior, especially defiance towards authority has become so prevalent that extreme cases were identified as a learning disability referred to as Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD)(Smith and Bondy 2007).

Methods have been created in dealing with these types of oppositional behaviors such as conducting morning meetings, increasing student's decision making, and creating responsive curriculum (Smith and Bondy 2007). In the era of high-stakes and accountability, instruction has become more focused which created a disconnect with students. Smith and

Bondy (2007) recommended that teachers should act as professionals by creating a personal disconnect and not taking such actions personal.

Positive encouragement and reinforcement were found to curb negative behavior. Providing validation and consistency towards students showed to support student learning as well as curbing negative behavior (Hendley 2007).

Behavior was considered a root cause for inadequate student performance in the classroom. While managing a classroom effectively and a lack of down time has shown to positively prevent disruptive behavior (VonVillas, 2004). Many educators possess inadequacies and a lack of training in these areas. Student behavior in the classroom has hindered student retention and slowed the delivery of instruction.

### Summary

The NCLB Act caused many school districts to reevaluate current educational practices. With more limitations placed on schools than ever and higher expectations, officials must be presented adequate

results or pressured districts around the country will be placed on the monitored AYP list.

The RTI model, a highly researched program, met the requirements of NCLB using data driven results to provide students with the instruction necessary for student performance.

In this project, the author illustrated the RTI model's effectiveness in the OBSD, more specially, Ilwaco Middle School. Through research, the author found varied reasons to conduct such models in the public education setting, which validated the intention of this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology and Treatment of Data

#### Introduction

In 2004 Congress reauthorized the Individuals with disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and in 2001 the Bush administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This legislation stressed the use of professionally sound interventions and instruction based on defensible research, as well as the delivery of effective academic and behavior programs to improve student performance (Bergeson, 2006). In summation, the language implied that all students' needs must be met using research backed methods. The model that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) supported was Response to Intervention (RTI).

Research indicated that the use of a multi-tiered model to be an effective educational practice within schools and helped to bring high quality instruction to every student (Bush, 2006 and Bergeson, 2006). Designed to meet every student's needs, the RTI model used quality instruction by increasing the time each

student spent emerged in the subject matter based on their performance. A major underlying concept of RTI was identifying the students of need before they qualified for special education. Students were placed in a three-tiered system on the basis of their abilities. Those students who scored extremely low in reading were considered to be intensive and were placed at the top of the tier. Those students who scored lower than average were referred to as strategic and were placed on the middle tier. The students who were at grade level were classified as the core group and were placed on the lowest tier (Figure 1). In each grouping students individual needs were met.

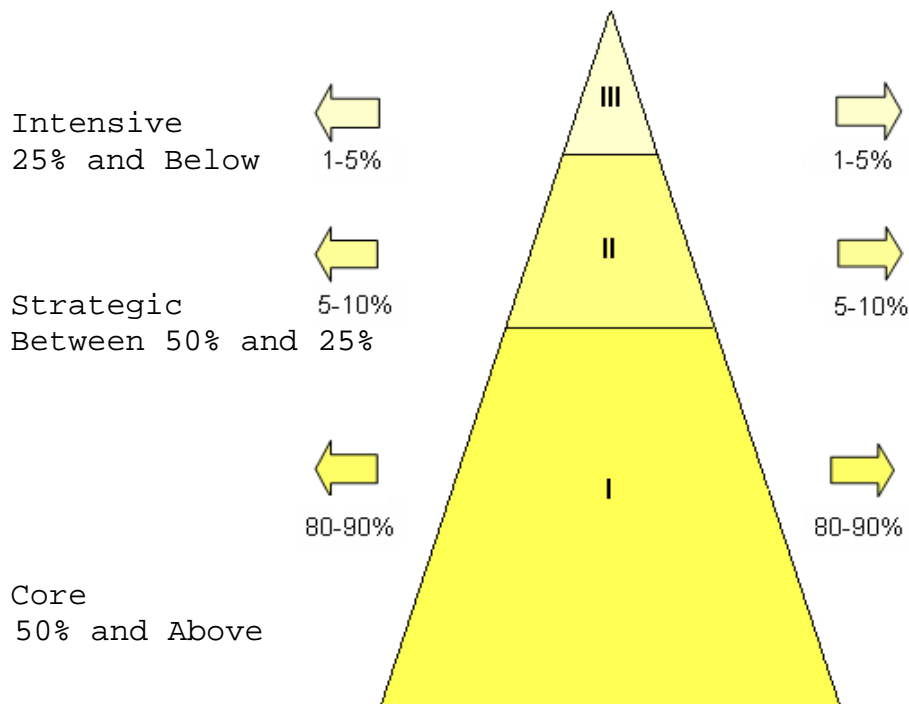


Figure 1. RTI Three-Tier Model (Bergeson, 2006)

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) also required students to test every year for grades 3-8 and at least once for the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. "Each district must show that students are meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), which is 95%, this includes English Language Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and students of diverse ethnic background." (Hivey, 2005) Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) created a way

to continually monitor student progress (Wiley, 2005). In the Ocean Beach School District and at Ilwaco Middle School, students took a grade level Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) test. An ORF was a one minute test in which students read orally to an instructor. The performance was measured by the number of words per minute read correctly in that time period (Wiley, 2005). The one minute ORF test was used as a grade level indicator for each student. Hamilton and Shinn (2003) criticized and claimed that a fluency test couldn't grade reading comprehension, however, Wiley (2005) found that this criticism to be false. With the ORF results, educators could place the student in the appropriate tier and focus on individual student needs.

To support the RTI model, research has been done to investigate its validity:

Eleven Schools took part in this experiment, four for English intervention and seven for the Spanish Intervention. All first graders in each of the 11 schools were screened at the beginning



of the school year so that they could be assessed and identified for proper instruction. At the end of the first grade 31 of the students who received Spanish intervention, 30 responded, of the 22 students who received English intervention 20 responded (Thompson, 2005).

Compared to the control group, a greater percentage of students responded to intervention.

In an attempt to replicate the RTI model, the OBSD adopted the AIMSweb System. AIMSweb, an online database was "designed to measure and monitor oral reading fluency, comprehension, early literacy, spelling, and other basic skills" (Cloud, 2004). The system helped teachers to track and monitor student process and created documentation and provided reports, charts, and other forms of raw data. The system was designed to allowed teachers to recognize the individual needs of students in order to focus on the needed instruction.

The Ocean Beach School District adopted the Response to Intervention (RTI) model which was

endorsed by OSPI Office. The model focused on students with below grade level reading skills and recommended these students receive intensive reading training so that they could close the gap and/or reach grade level. Ocean Beach School District executed this program by using the online database called AIMSweb. Each student was given a ORF at the beginning of the year which measured their reading fluency. Once the scores were obtained, each building used AIMSweb to track each student's progress. Students who read at grade level and above were considered core students. Students who had below the 50 percentile and above 25% of grade level reading were labeled strategic, took reading classes twice a day, and tested once a month to monitor progress. Students who scored below the 25% in grade level reading were labeled intensive, took one special intensive reading class in addition to two reading classes per day. This group was tested every two weeks and progress was monitored. The intended goal under this model was to help students experience multiple years' growth in one year. All

students were tested at least three times per year, and all students were expected to improve on each test as grade level expectation increased. Students below grade level in reading, and who received extra reading lab/s found a change in their reading scores. There was no significant difference between the intensive, strategic, and core student scores when the final test of the year was administered.

#### Methodology

During the course of the study, the students of Ilwaco Middle School were monitored and continually tested according to their placement. Tier 1 students took three ORF tests per year, Tier 2 students were tested once a month, and Tier 3 students tested every two weeks.

#### Participants

The participants for this study were seventh and eighth grade students from Ilwaco Middle School. The school's population was approximately eighty percent Caucasian, fourteen percent Hispanic, around one percent Black and Asian, and nearly two percent Native

American. The number of students in grades seven through eight participating in the study was one hundred and sixty two. There were eighty-nine eighth graders and seventy-two seventh graders. After the first test there were sixty-six eighth graders in tier one, thirteen in tier two, and ten in tier three. Of the seventh grade fifty-four were in tier one, ten in tier two, and eight in tier three.

This was a quantitative research project and because of the amount of students in tier two and three in each grade level the results may not have truly reflected the results of a larger population.

### Instruments

All students were administered an ORF test to measure fluency. During the administration of the test students were given the same test three times in a row. In most cases, students scored within one to three words per minute on each test, which calculated an average. Due to the small range of difference between each test the researcher has considered this instrument reliable. Student scores also closely

resembled other scores in similar reading areas. For example, students who showed proficiency of the ORF also showed proficiency in grade level course work and reading WASL scores. Students who showed reading skills below grade level on the ORF typically had low grades in reading, and scored below proficiency on the WASL adding to the validity of the instrument. All data and scores were collected and monitored through the AIMSweb database.

#### Design

Each student was given a pre-test at the beginning of the year, placing them in the appropriate tier. Students who improved ORF scores from Tier 2 and Tier 3 groups were placed accordingly to a suitable tier.

#### Procedure

During the first week of school, ORF tests were systematically administered to each student. Once the results were calculated each student received a schedule change if necessary. Students who qualified for tier one instruction (core group) received one

reading class during the year as originally scheduled. Students who qualified for Tier 2 instruction (strategic group) received a second reading lab to help raise performance. Students whose scores qualified for Tier 3 level of instruction (intensive group) received reading three times per day, one intensive class, one reading lab, and one grade level reading class.

Students who classified for tier one instruction were given a school wide pre, mid, and post-test throughout the year. Students in Tier 2, classified strategic, were tested once a month in addition to the school wide testing. Students in Tier 3, classified intensive, were tested every two weeks in addition to school wide testing. All groups were monitored for progress once the pre-test results were entered.

#### Treatment of Data

The researcher analyzed data over the course of the 2006-2007 school year. To organize and track data the researcher used AIMSweb along with detailed data analysis to recognize any occurring trends.

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis of Data

#### Introduction

The Ocean Beach School District (OBSD) used Response to Intervention (RTI) in response to the demands placed on schools from the federal government. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) created a difficult task for schools who could not find researched based models to meet the differentiated needs of students. Response to Intervention, when executed appropriately, has been proven through research to meet the needs that NCLB by identifying students in need and delivering appropriate student-focused instruction.

#### Description of Environment

The study held at Ilwaco Middle School was conducted by the researcher in the 2006-2007 school year. The students in this study were ranging in age from the seventh and eighth grades. All students were given an ORF test which created a grade level score in words per minute. Students who required more instruction based on their scores were scheduled for

additional reading classes. Students who read above the 50% in their grade level were considered core student and were given a grade level Language Arts class. Students who scored below the 50% and above the 25% were labeled strategic and were given language arts classes as well as an additional reading lab, which was focused on the students reading deficiencies. Students that scored below the 25% were labeled intensive received everything a strategic student received with an additional reading lab. All students were subject to the test, and were separated by the outcome of the ORF test.

#### Hypothesis/Research Question

Ilwaco Middle School students were given a diagnostic tool called an Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) test which generated a fluency score. Students were then placed in appropriate reading classes and labs, depending on the test scores outcomes. Students who tested below grade level in reading and received an extra reading lab(/s) found a change in their reading



abilities compared to those students in regular/core classes.

### Results of the Study

Ilwaco Middle school used AimsWeb, an online database, to collect and organize data throughout the course of the 2006-2007 school year. Conclusive evidence showed an overwhelming support that the program did work. Throughout the course of the year students were expected to meet grade level reading standards. These standards were set by national norms, and increased throughout the course of the school year which modeled natural growth of grade level reading. This implied that struggling readers not only had to improve their personal performance to close the gap in reading ability but also had to increase with the natural progression of grade level reading fluency.

The researcher concluded that the RTI program using an ORF as a performance indicator did in fact support the hypothesis. The number of students who required extra assistance, improved their reading fluency therefore

meeting grade level standard. The researcher found that the number of students who required intervention over the course of the year decreased (Table 1 and 2).

The amount of students in each group was set by a pre-test at the beginning of the year. To start the year in the eighth grade there were 53 students in the core group, 20 in the Strategic group and 20 in the Intensive group. As the year progressed some students were lost due to mortality but the ending numbers for the year were 58 in the Core group, 16 in the Strategic group and 10 in the Intensive group. The number of students who required intervention decreased placing more students at grade level as referred to in the following table (Table 3).

In the seventh grade there were 33 students in the Core group, 20 in the Strategic group, and 13 in the Intensive group. Throughout the course of the year only one student was lost due to mortality. The end of the year ORF test produced results placing 39 students in the Core group, 14 in the Strategic group, and 12 in the Intensive group referenced to in Table 4.

Table 1

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Improvements

<b>8th Grade</b>	<b>Fall</b>			<b>Winter</b>			<b>Spring</b>		
	<b>Core</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Intensive</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Intensive</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Intensive</b>
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
	53	20	20	57	17	14	58	16	10
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	171.66	129	84.05	180.1754	135.9412	90.85714	191.0862	146	97.4

Table 2

7<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Improvements

<b>7th Grade</b>	<b>Fall</b>			<b>Winter</b>			<b>Spring</b>		
	<b>Core</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Intensive</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Intensive</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Intensive</b>
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
	33	20	13	36	8	14	39	14	12
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	172.697	123.05	87.69231	182.9444	126.375	99.07143	198.0769	140.6429	106.5

Table 3

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Count

8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Fall			Winter			Spring		
	Core	Strategic	Intensive	Core	Strategic	Intensive	Core	Strategic	Intensive
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
	53	20	20	57	17	14	58	16	10

Table 4

7<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Count

7th Grade	Fall			Winter			Spring		
	Core	Strategic	Intensive	Core	Strategic	Intensive	Core	Strategic	Intensive
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
	33	20	13	36	8	14	39	14	12

Over time, the amount of students in the Core group increased in both grade levels, signifying growth amongst students in the Core group to sustain Core group achievement, as well as students in lower groups who later qualified for Core level status (Figures 2&3).

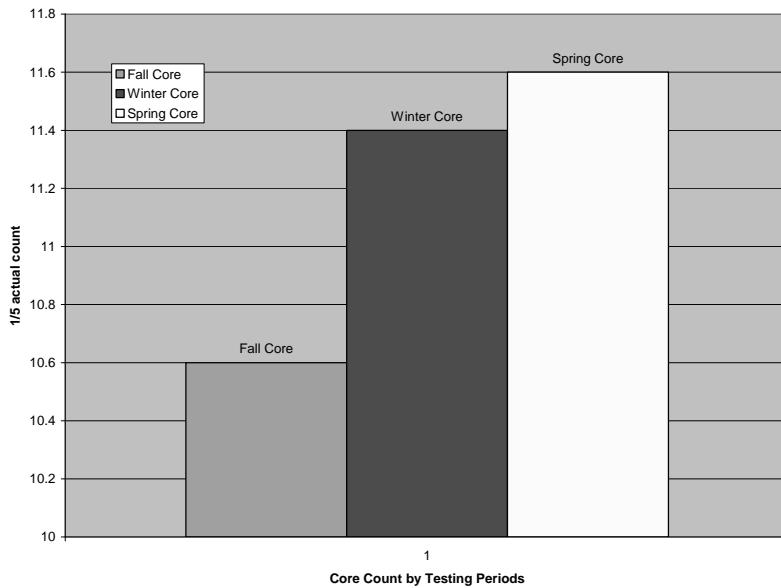


Figure 2. 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Core Count

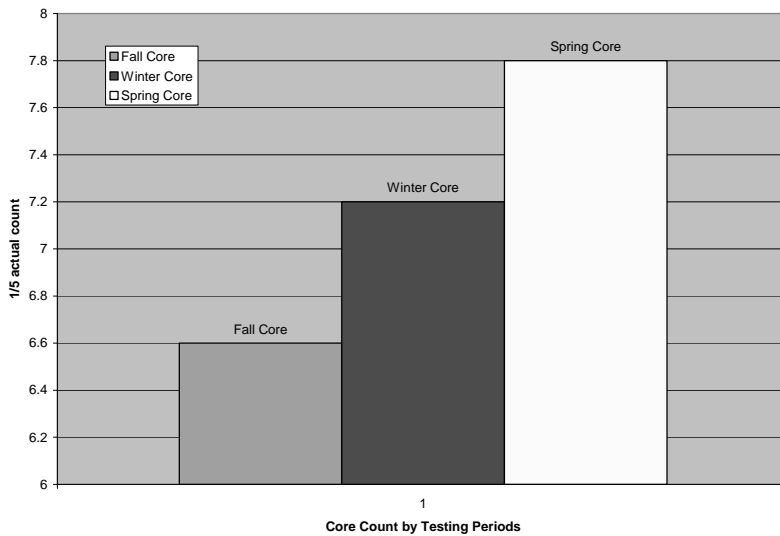


Figure 3. 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Core Count

The number of students who required remediation decreased. Over time, students showed to meet grade level or improve in their reading skills. For example, students in the strategic group qualified for the core group and students in the intensive group improved to the strategic group (Figures 4-6). In an isolated event, a student did qualify for the strategic level instruction during fall testing and later tested into the intensive level instruction during the winter. By the end of the year the student tested back into the strategic group. This was the only indication of negative growth.

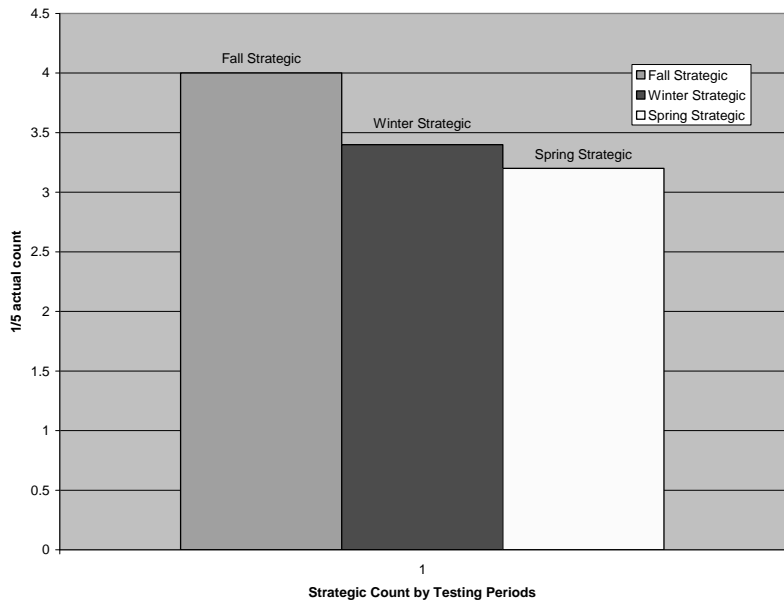


Figure 4. 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Strategic Count

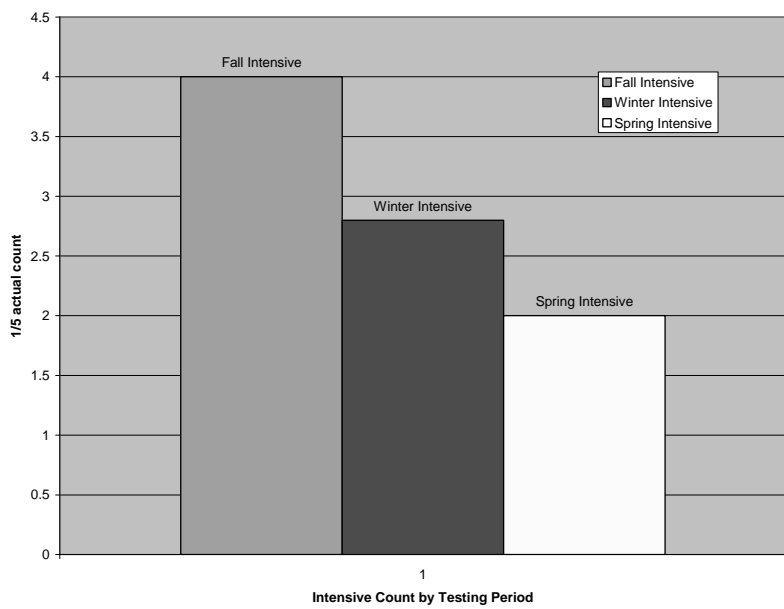


Figure 5. 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Intensive Count

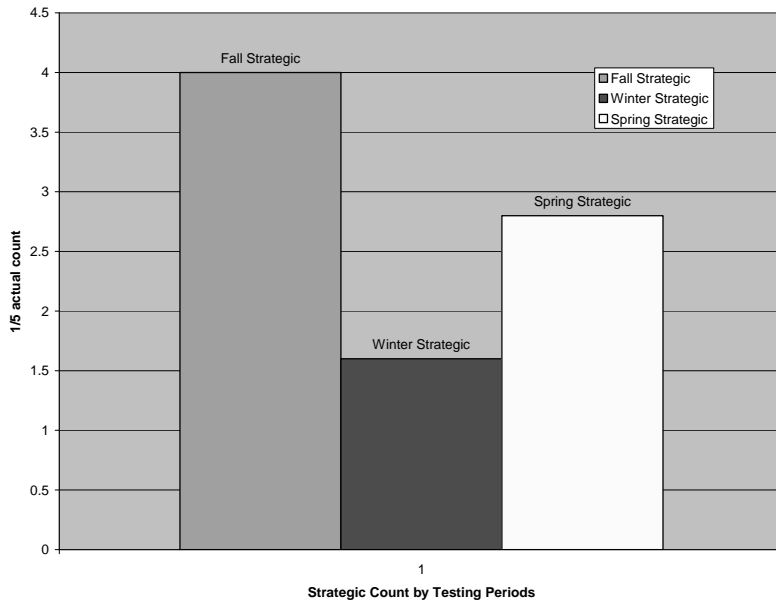


Figure 6. 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Strategic Count

As previously mentioned by the researcher, students in each group were expected to improve reading fluency as a result of maturation. Suggesting that the fluency score which defined each group increased over time. As the year progressed and student population changed in each group the researcher also found that the mean showed an overall increase, which implied that growth occurred at all levels.

In the eighth grade the beginning mean for the core group was at 171.66 words per minute (WPM), in



the strategic group 129 WPM, and the intensive group 84 WPM. The final means at the end of the school year in the core group were 191.08 WPM, 146 WPM in the strategic group, and 97.4 WPM in the intensive. For the seventh grade, the beginning mean for the core group was 172.7 WPM, 123 WPM for the strategic group, and 87.7 WPM in the intensive. The final means produced 198.1 WPM in the core group, 140.6 WPM in the strategic group, and 106.5 WPM in the intensive group. Both classes indicated overall mean growth over the course of the 2006-2007 school year (Figures 7 &8). The following graphs show that the mean ORF rate in all groups increased, from fall to winter and spring testing periods.

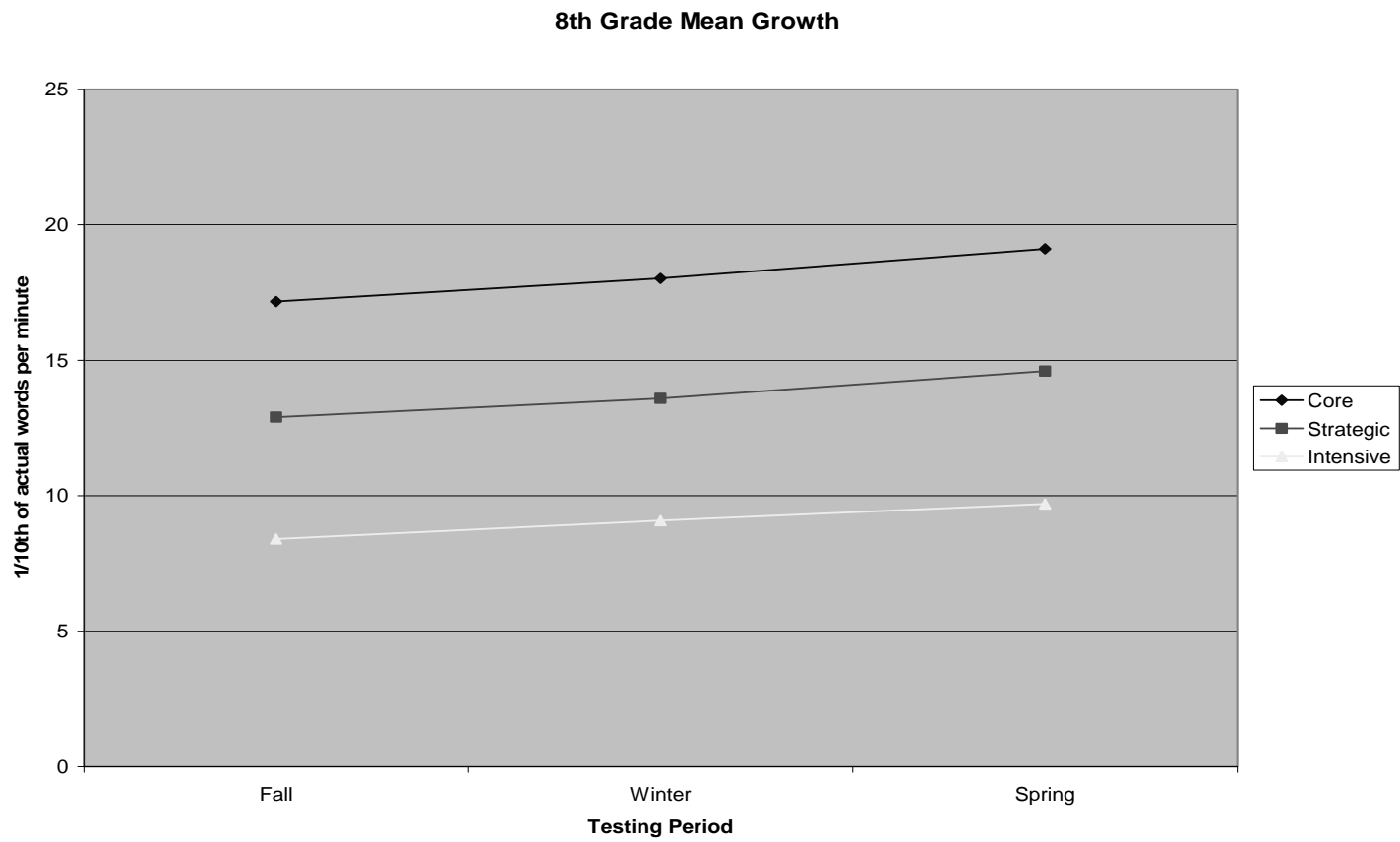


Figure 7. 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Mean Core Growth

### 7th Grade Mean Growth

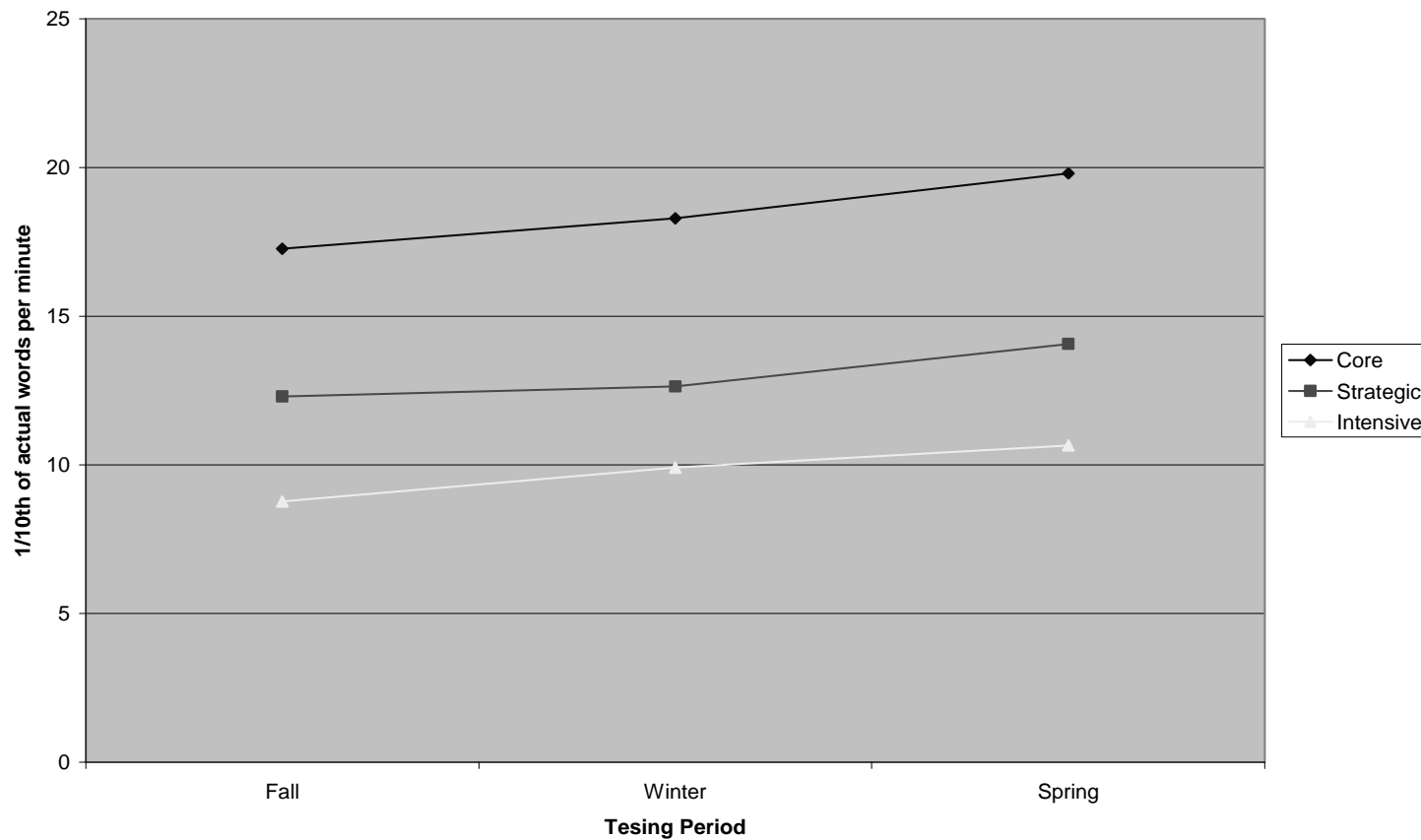


Figure 8. 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Mean Growth

## Findings

Both count totals and the mean values have shown growth over the course of the year. The researcher has supported the hypothesis due to an increase in students operating at the core level and an overall decrease in the amount of student who have required remedial classes. An overall mean increase in all groups and in all grade levels supported the RTI program and made a positive impact on student reading scores in all levels. The RTI program did increase student reading fluency scores in most cases, which implied an increase in grade level reading ability beyond the natural increase in reading ability due to growing older.

## Discussion

This study produced results that the researcher expected to find. The research based RTI model has worked in many school districts across the country and has shown that Ilwaco Middle School students improved in this study.

Through the course of the year, the researcher discovered that some of the materials presented to the students by the instructor were not supportive of the program and were not supported by the administration. The problem was adjusted and yet still produced positive results. Had the correct material been presented to the students in a timely fashion throughout the entirety of the year, the researcher would have expected more positive results.

#### Summary

Ilwaco Middle school and the OBSD researched the program prior to administering it. By using ORF test scores the district was able to provide instruction to students who showed deficiencies in reading. The researcher's hypothesis was supported due to the large increase of student reading abilities experienced throughout the RTI program. Data conclusively held that less students required mediation at the end of the year compared to the beginning of the year. Student mean test scores increased in both the eighth

and seventh grade implying that along with an elevated class count in the core groups there was still overall growth in fluency rates.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Introduction

The Ocean Beach School District (OBSD) and Ilwaco Middle School identified the need for reading remediation in order to best serve students in the district. To meet the increased standards imposed by NCLB and other types of similar legislation. To be in compliance with this legislation the OBSD adopted the RTI model.

#### Summary

To effectively administer the RTI program, OBSD used ORF test scores to place students into three main groups. Those who were performing at grade level or above were identified as the core group. If students were performing below the 50<sup>th</sup> but above the 25<sup>th</sup> in reading fluency they were placed in the strategic group. Students who performed below the 25<sup>th</sup> were placed in the intensive group. Students in the core group received no remediation and were assigned a grade level Language Arts class. Students in the

Strategic group were assigned a reading lab along with a grade level Language Arts class. Students who were in the intensive group received one intensive reading lab, a reading lab, and a grade level reading class. All students were tested for progress three times per year, the groups who required remediation were tested more often.

With new legislation such as NCLB, schools across the nation were required to provide appropriate education for every student. The OBSD choose to use the highly researched program known as RTI. With many distracters in classroom such as behavioral issues and varying skill levels, Ilwaco Middle School was able to provide smaller classes with more individualized instruction to help diminish learning disruptions. This was shown to be effective.

At the beginning of the year all students at Ilwaco Middle School were administered and ORF test which produced and fluency score. With this score students were placed into appropriate groups and were provided the necessary instruction. Students in the



strategic group were tested once a month to monitor progress and students in the intensive group were tested twice a month. The reason behind the testing was to effectively identify student deficiencies and address them promptly. To monitor and track student performance Ilwaco Middle School used an online database known as AimsWeb.

The researcher concluded that the study was effective and did in fact improve student reading fluency scores. The researcher's hypothesis was supported as a result of the conclusive data presented. The amount of students in the core/grade level group increased throughout the year resulting in fewer students requiring remediation. Student fluency score means increased in all groups throughout the year implying growth in all levels.

### Conclusions

The researcher concluded that the RTI model was an effective model and did work for seventh and eighth grade students at Ilwaco Middle School. Compared to the beginning of the year the end of the year had

fewer students who required remediation and overall fluency score means increased in all groups and grade levels implying positive growth.

### Recommendations

For future reference it may be needed to conduct this study on a larger test sample. Others may want to pursue individual student scores to synthesis more precise results. The researcher should investigate the types of trainings that teachers have received and how the remediation classes are being administered to assure optimal results.

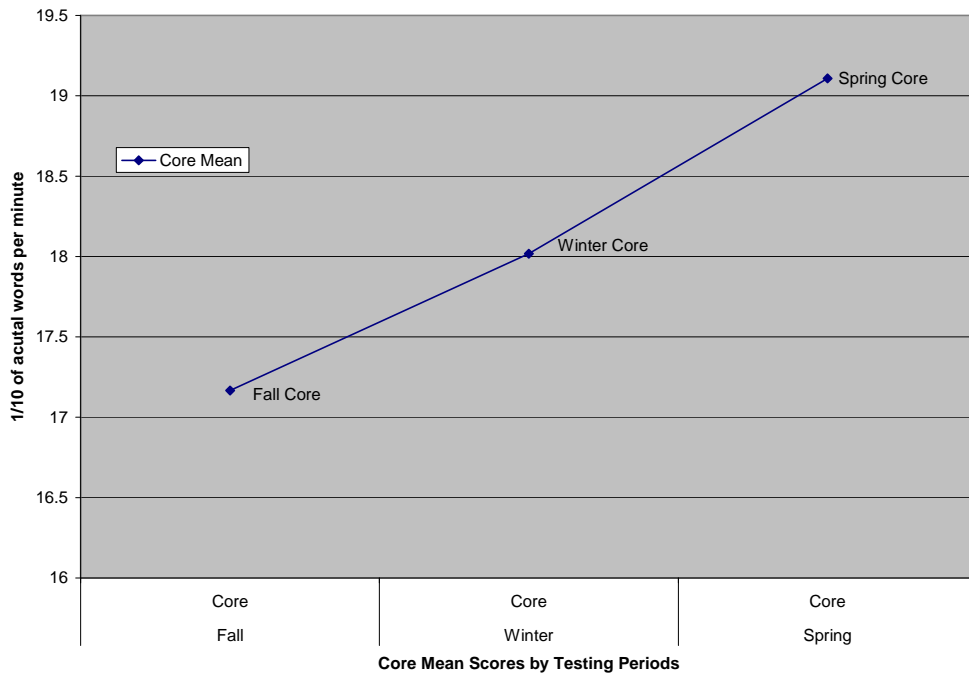
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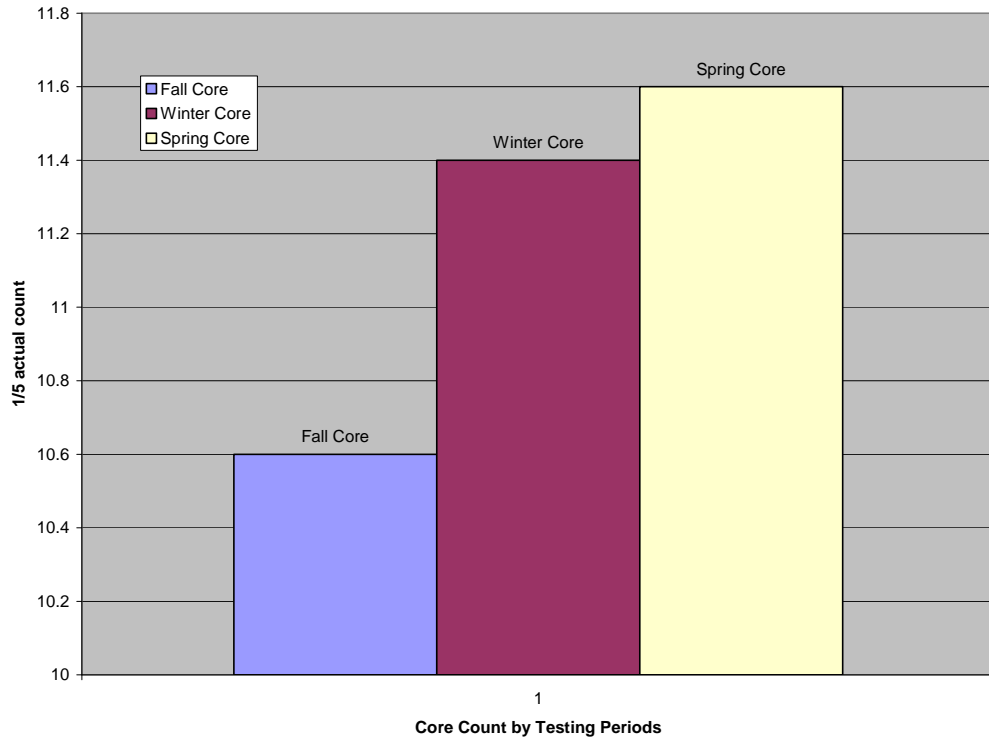
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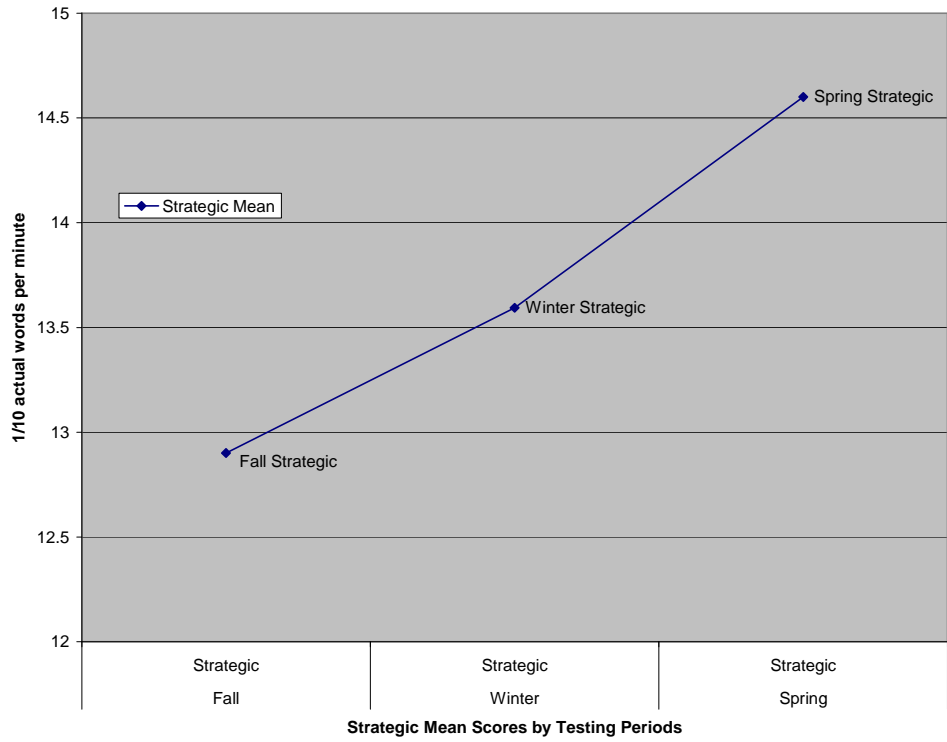
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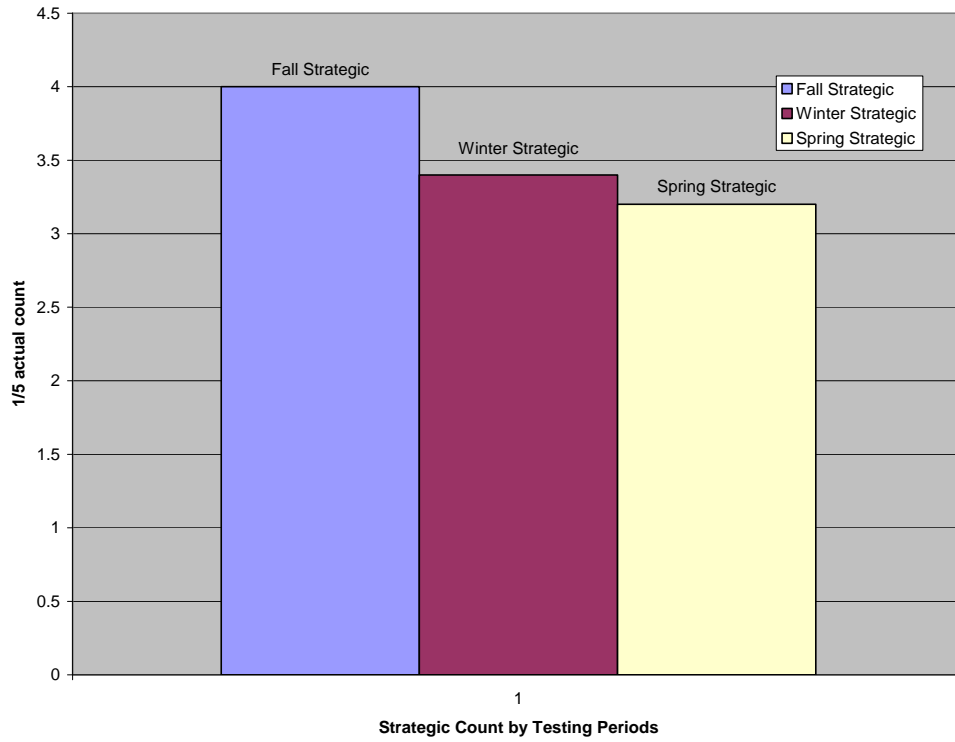
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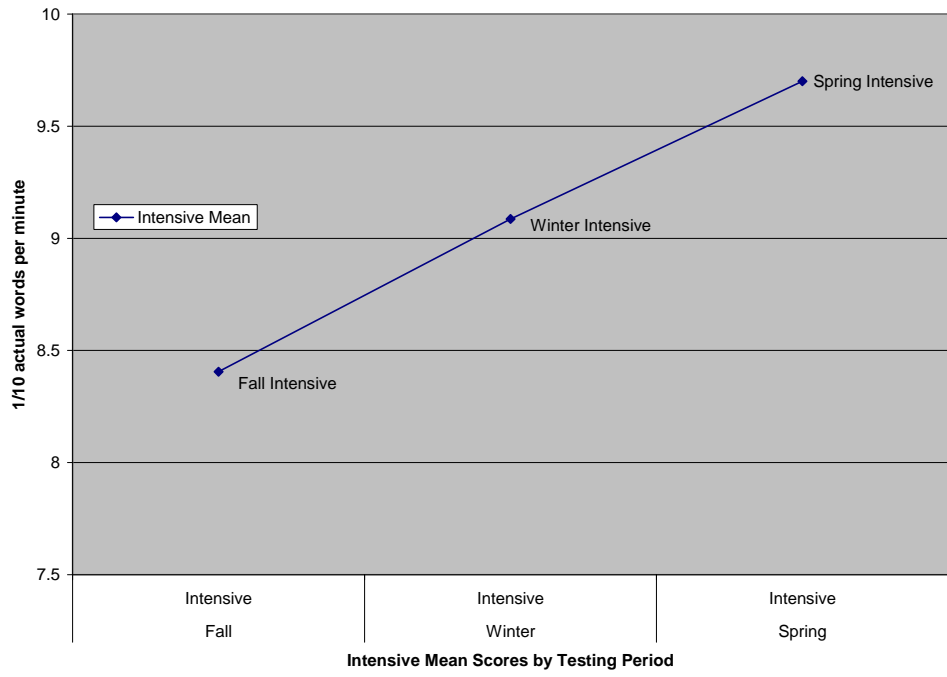


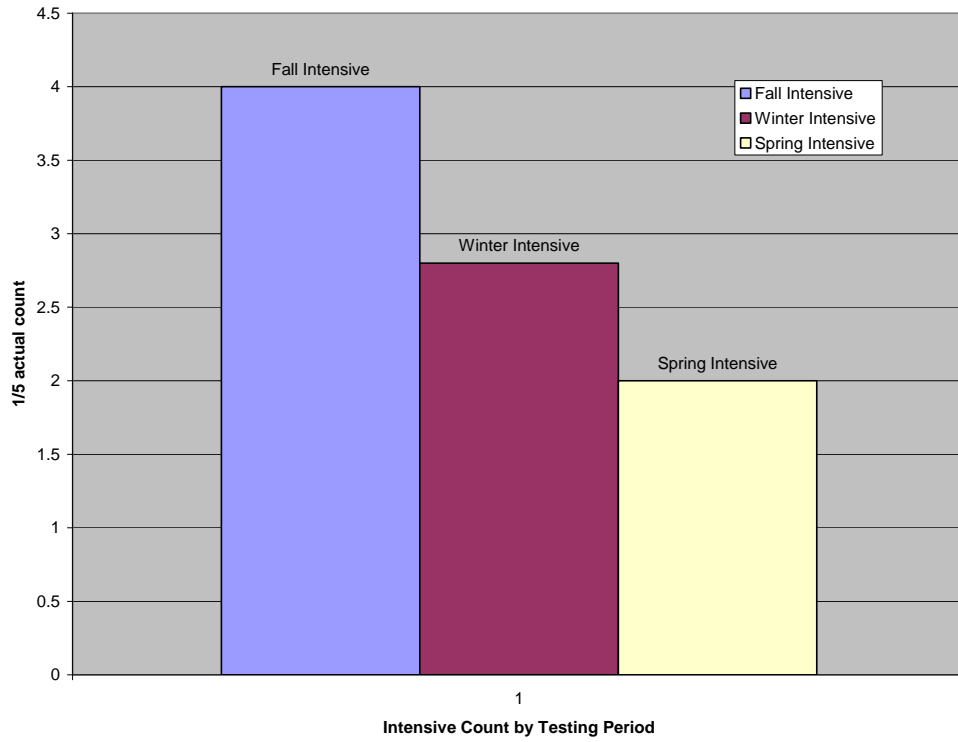


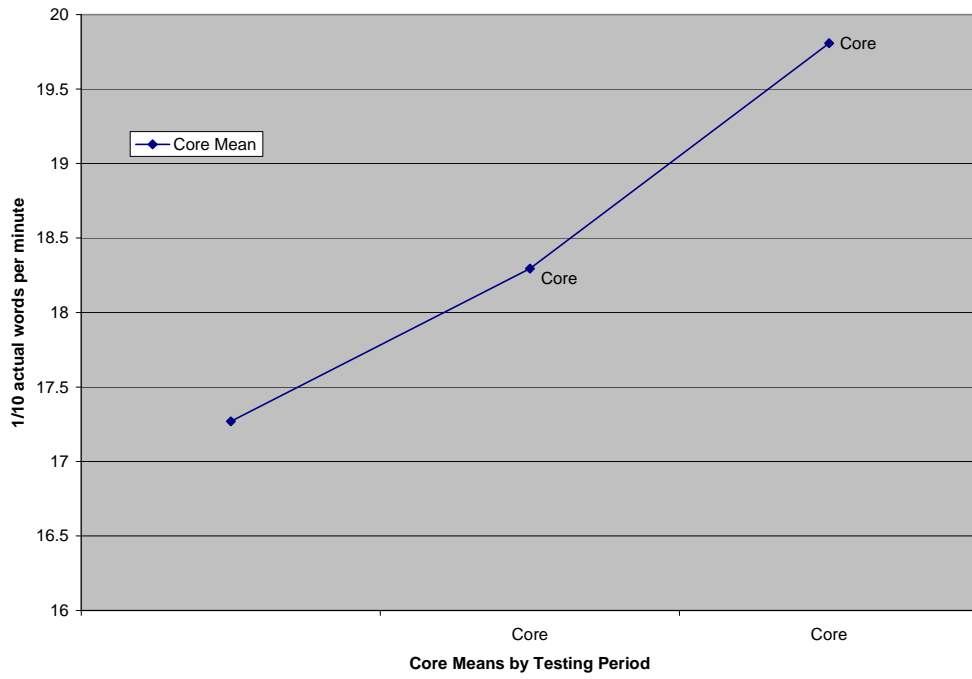


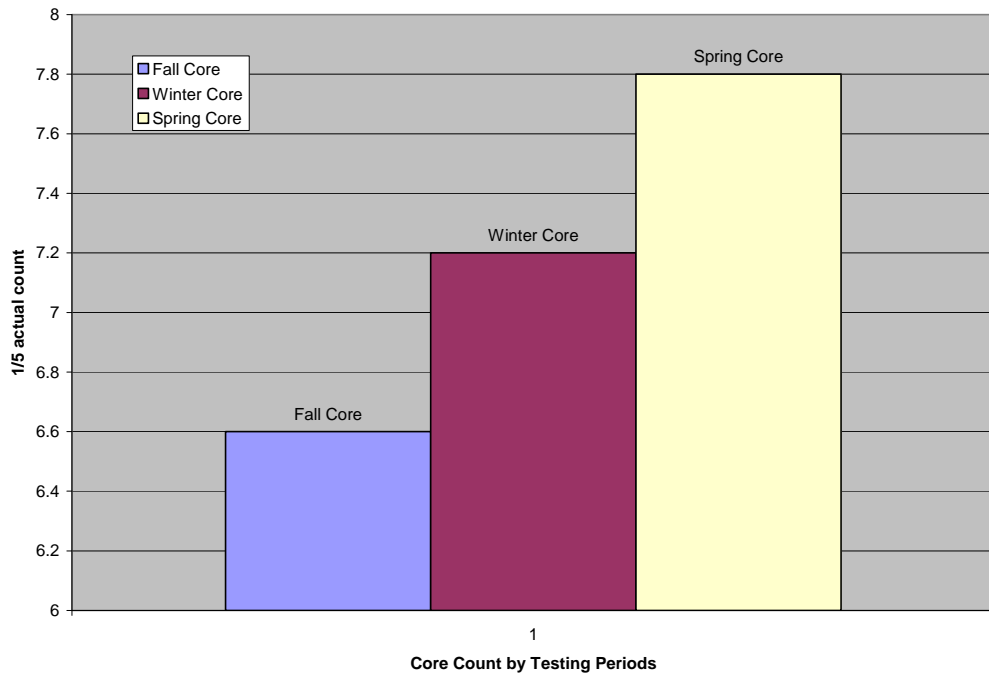


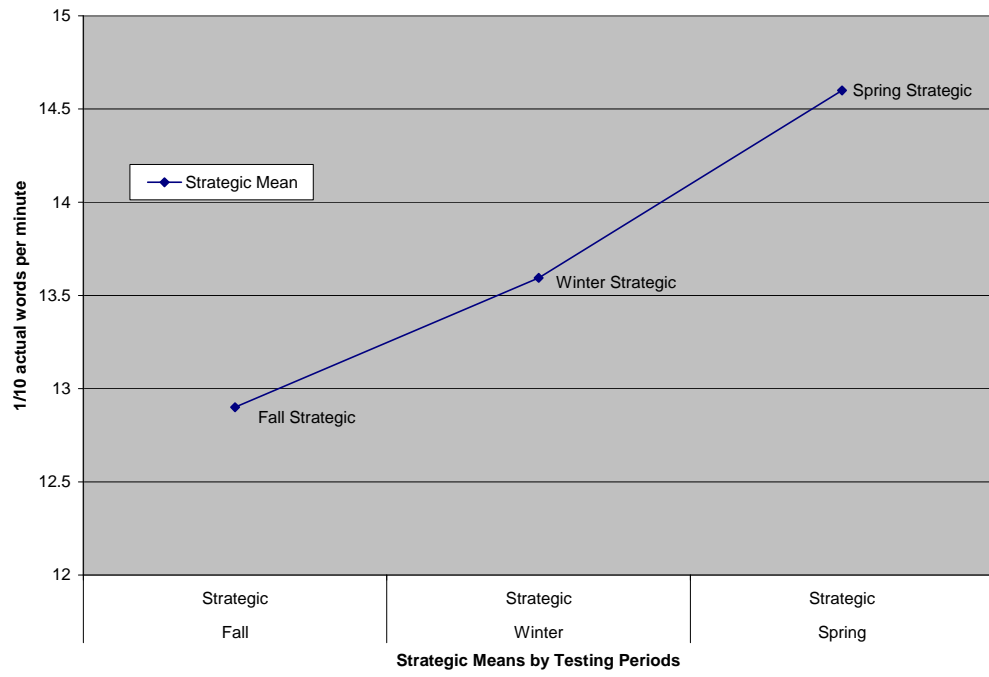


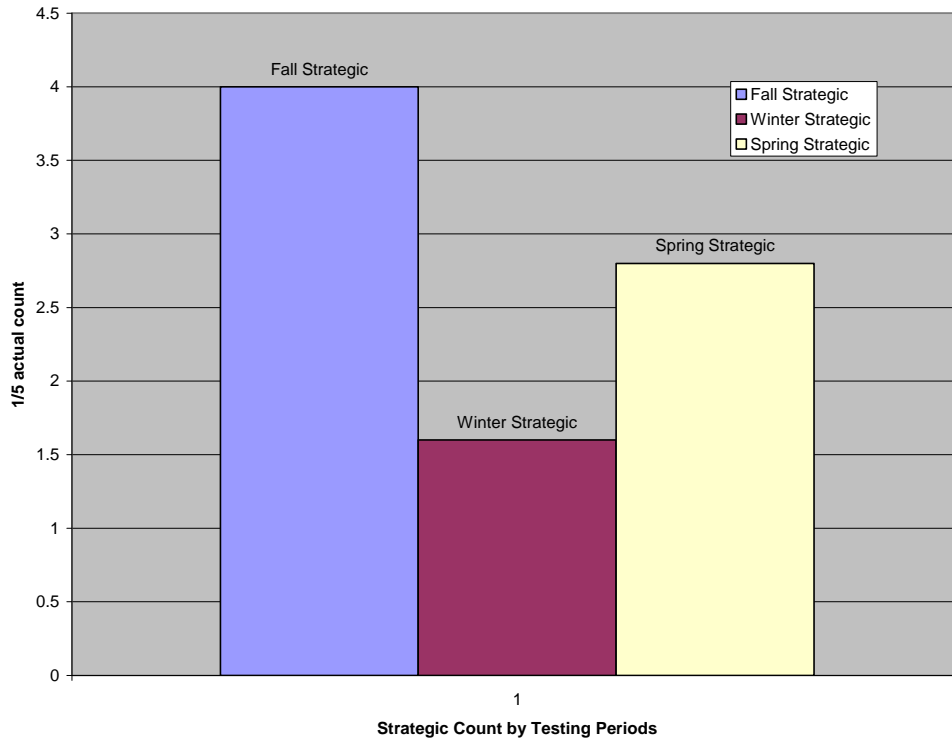




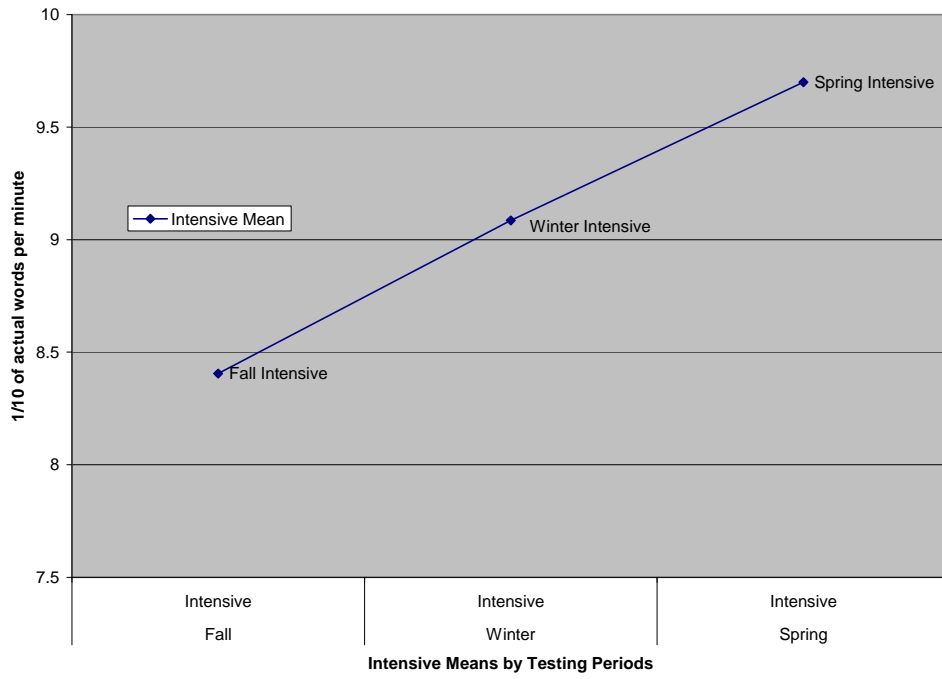


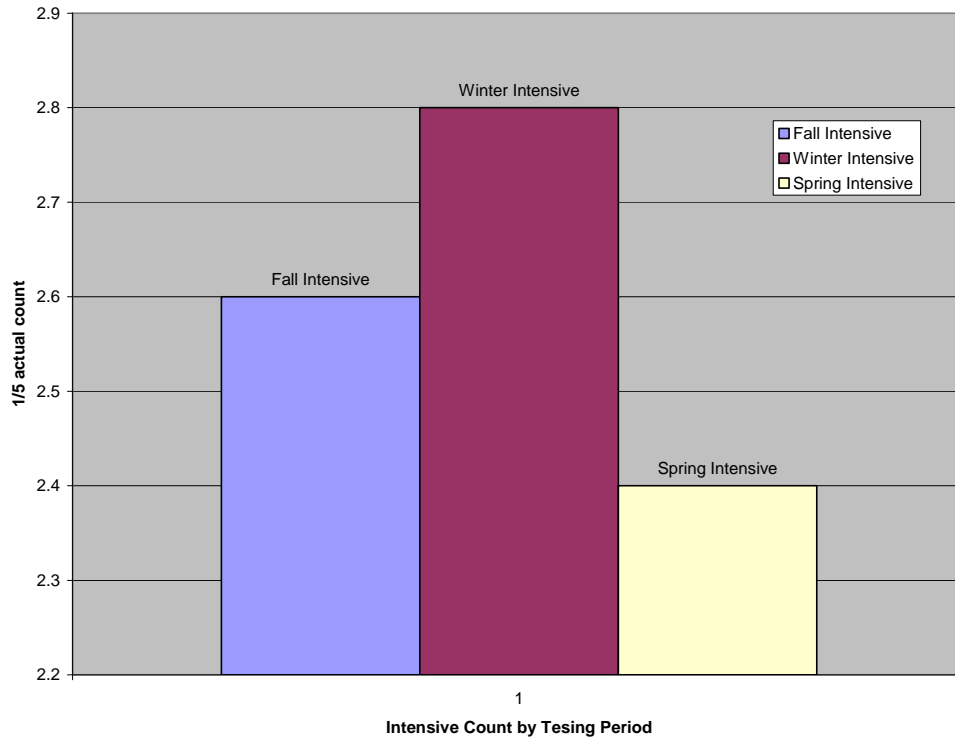




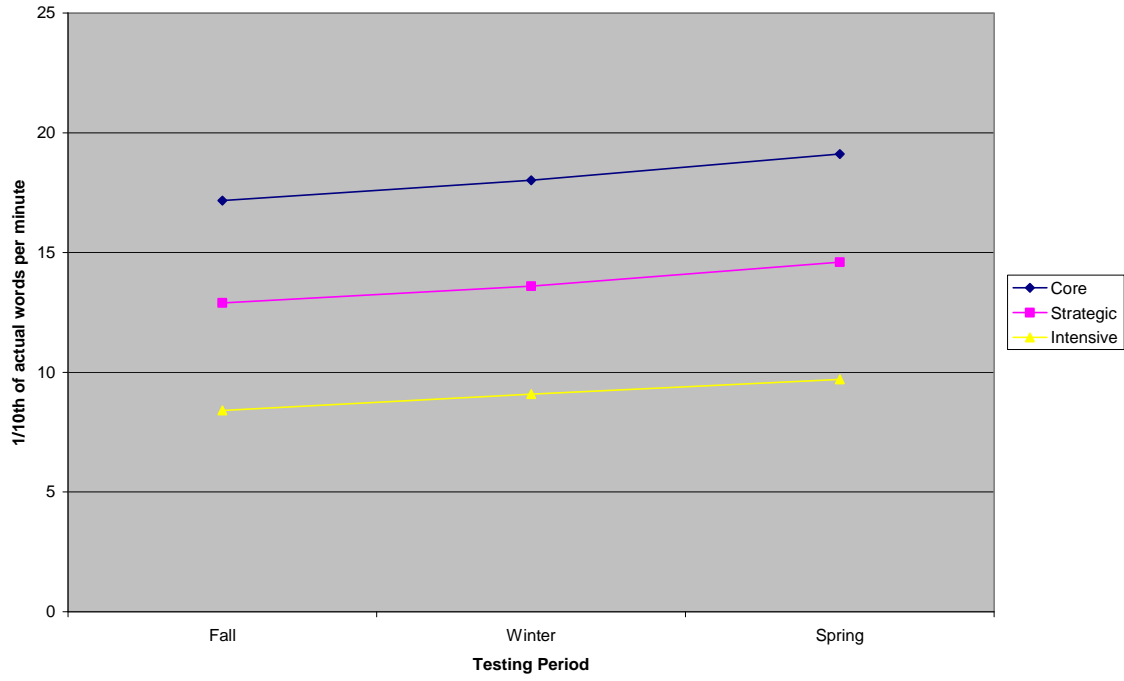








8th Grade Mean Growth



7th Grade Mean Growth

