

Winsor Learning Methodology

Using Data to Drive Instructional Decisions:

A Four Step Student Success Model

Schools are in many ways successfully implementing progress monitoring tools, and successfully identifying and grouping students according to the need of intervention; but using the data to make instructional decisions and implement intervention that meets the needs of each student has proven a daunting task for many educators implementing a school literacy plan.

Many teachers and administrators are asking themselves, “I have spent time and money identifying my struggling students, now what do I use in the classroom to help them succeed?” These schools have found a diagnosis for the illiteracy in their school. Now they are looking for a prescription - a methodology that helps them meet the identified needs of each student. This crucial element has been discussed in many meetings across the country including a “Development Forum” December 7-8, 2004 in which thirty-three organizations participated. Dr. Vinita Chhabra has published a summary of the symposium in which it was ultimately decided: *“It is not enough that instruction be both evidence-based and data-driven; teachers must also be able to understand and use the data gathered through the ongoing monitoring of students performance, in order to be able to tailor instruction to the student’s specific needs and in order for RTI to be successful,”* (Chhabra, 40, 46).

The Response to Intervention (RtI) framework has been created to help school personnel understand the deficiencies of their students and provide a process that focuses on identifying their deficiencies, intervening with tools that address specific deficiencies, and moving students to more intense intervention if the assessment data says that it is necessary. RtI has grown in popularity because the general framework is easily understood by all levels of school personnel. However, understanding the framework and implementing that framework on the ground are decidedly different tasks.

Winsor Learning has found that schools implementing this popular RtI strategy face a few challenges as they make decisions about implementation. Figure 1, below, outlines many of them.

Schools Understand	Challenges
The importance of gathering data using Curriculum Based Measures (CBM).	Is the data gathered from Curriculum Based Measurements accurate?
The importance of using a data management tool that helps organize and report CBM data.	Are the reports from the data management system being used to help educators make accurate instructional decisions?
The Importance of a team-based approach that uses the data to chart a course of action for each student.	Are they able to use these reading team meetings to make data-driven instructional decisions that will give each student the best chance to succeed?
The importance of implementing and differentiating instructional strategies with each student based on the data.	Are teachers able to effectively use the instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student? Do administrators understand the importance of awareness and implementation training?

Figure 1: School Challenge Chart

A Solution to the Challenges:

As a result of its work with school districts throughout the country, Winsor Learning has developed a methodology that helps schools implement a successful literacy program. The methodology relies on four elements that, we find, need to be in place and practiced well for students to be successful. We find it to be an iterative and cyclical process, known as the Four Steps to Student Success.

The Four Steps to Student Success (Figure 2):

1. Assess – Gather, Enter and Analyze the Data
2. Plan the Intervention
3. Implement the Intervention
4. Monitor Progress - Evaluate Effectiveness

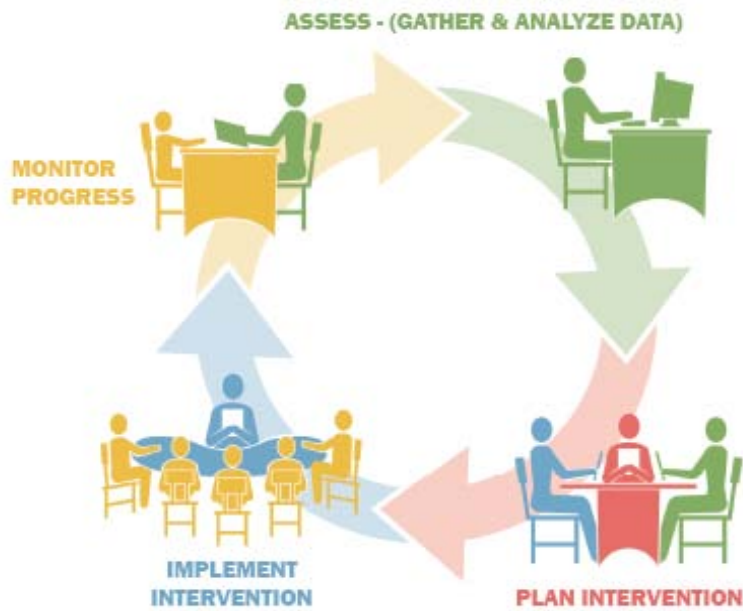


Figure 2: The Four Steps to Student Success

Step 1. Assess - Gather, Enter and Analyze the Data:

Gathering data on student performance is an essential element that, when used effectively, can lead to sound instructional decisions and extraordinary student performance. If a client has not chosen a testing and data gathering tool, our consultants can help choose an efficient and worthy tool for the job. If a client has chosen a progress monitoring tool and data management system, it needs to be used effectively to deliver data that is meaningful and accurate. Making instructional decisions with faulty data is an inefficient use of resources. Our consultants can help clients use their Curriculum-Based Measurement tools effectively so data is accurate and helps drive instruction.

Data entry and creating reports are essential but time consuming. Even when time is taken to enter data, that data needs to be reported in a way that makes sense to administration and instructors so good instructional decisions can be made about each student. We find that even when data is present and reports are generated, student grouping remains a daunting task. Winsor Learning experts advise our clients how to use the leading data management systems to enter student data, analyze the data and create necessary reports. Some of the data management systems provide thousands of reports. Our experts will guide our clients toward the appropriate reports so that quick but precise conclusions can be reached. Our experts also provide student grouping advice that leads to better instructional decisions and, ultimately student success.

Step 2. Plan the Intervention:

Creating an Intervention Plan for each student and allocating resources to meet the needs of that student is a job that is perfected with experience. When the reading team gathers to discuss the deficiencies of each student, those decisions are more efficient and accurate when data from assessments and data management reports are on the table. Winsor Learning experts work with reading teams and administrators to help plan their intervention strategies, and allocate resources (both human and monetary) so schools can take their existing staff and realign them to meet student needs. This process sets instructors and students up for success.

Step 3. Implement the Intervention:

Once the Plan has been set, the most important part is yet to come – instructors working with students to improve deficits. Instructional materials that are easy to use, effective and are able to be implemented immediately are the key to success. Professional support on the use of the tools leads to better use and better results. The intervention process is a Winsor Learning core competency. Our roots are in reading intervention. All of the experts that visit with instructors and administrators have worked with students in an intervention setting, so they can look school staff in the eye and say “I’ve been where you are – trying to help struggling students succeed - and I will show you how to help these students”. Professional Development for administrators and instructors focuses on training that is useful in the short term, but is also implemented throughout the school year. We have found that ongoing coaching leads to better instructional fidelity as instructor knowledge and skills improve. Winsor Learning coaches spend time with instructors in their setting to help foster this all important fidelity.

Step 4. Monitor Progress - Evaluate Effectiveness:

Once instruction is happening, the cycle starts over by evaluating the student progress. We ask “Is it working?” Schools must periodically gather and analyze data on student performance and view reports on the literacy program to gauge the success of the interventions being used on each student. Adjustments to the teacher’s instructional materials and training, as well as student grouping are all essential to the continued success of each student. Winsor Learning experts help administrators and teachers make these adjustments based on the student data and reports.

While data-driven decisions should be a part of the strategy that schools employ to strive for student success, there is need for a methodology that overlays the effort. Whereas RTI provides guidelines for schools to follow, the implementation of the guidelines leaves room for interpretation and therefore a chance for challenges to arise that impede successful implementation. A daily, monthly and yearly work plan combined with support from experts who have experience overcoming RTI challenges are major elements to the methodology.

Applying the 4 Steps to Practice

In working with our clients to implement the Four Steps to Success we have come to recognize that there are nuances of the process that need detailed attention for the process to work smoothly and successfully with each client. Many of the issues are universal, but each school has slightly different challenges. We have recognized there are six performance domains that need to be addressed during the genesis of each project. These performance domains help focus attention on each critical component of the Rtl process and help our clients apply the Four Steps to practice in their schools.

Rtl Process with Six Performance Domains:

We develop Rtl implementation through the efficient coordination of six alterable performance domains: people, context, content, process, infrastructure, and communication (Good, Simmons, Kame'enui, and Chard, 2003). Below is a brief description of each performance domain.

Domain 1- People:

Rtl has a reputation for being about data management. Although this is a driving factor in the Rtl model, people produce data not the other way around. Data does not teach students to read. People with the right knowledge, skills, and attitudes do.

Domain 2- Context:

Vision tells people where they are going. Context tells them how to get there. People implementing Rtl need to understand what data to collect, how to analyze that data and why specific data is important. They can then make good decisions through constructive conversations for positive outcomes. Context guides decisions like instructional time, choice of assessment, program analysis, work flow priorities, and how best to use technology.

Domain 3 - Content:

Once the context is clear, people need the right tools. They need to be trained effectively in how to use them, and they need adequate support. All tools, including assessment and instructional materials, procedural supports, and data management systems need to make sense within the context of the goals and objectives of the model.

Domain 4- Process:

Once the right people are in place, with the right understanding and the right tools, processes are needed that expedite the flow of data so that it becomes meaningful information. Tasks and roles need to be clearly defined, documented and evaluated. Processes should enhance context and remove barriers that impede cooperation.

Domain 5- Infrastructure:

Infrastructure pertains to technology and environment. Everything seems to be in place, until it is discovered that the media center cannot be used for instruction because the roof is leaking, one of the support staff has been double booked for an intervention time slot, and no one can access the data management system because the computers are down. This is reality in many of our schools, but most limitations can be overcome with creative planning. Even if best efforts are employed, no school is perfect. Limits exist in every domain and adaptability is a virtue.

Domain 6- Communication:

Think of information as data that makes a difference. (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) The form that the data takes can be presented in different ways, but it must be communicated. The purpose of communication is to change the way of perceiving something and to cause an impact on judgment and behavior. An effective Rtl model captures the most important information and presents it in shareable forms designed to enhance positive participation and remove negative barriers.

In an effort to illustrate practical implementation of the problem solving model, a case study is presented below.

Case Study

The following is a case study of how this model was used in detail in one school of over 500 with which our consultants have provided service.

Case Study: A School in Rural North Carolina (School A)

Vital Statistics:

Grades K-5

Traditional Public School Providing Traditional Services

Traditional Calendar

Project Funding: Title 1, IDEA

613 Students

Assessing the School A

Initial information and data was gathered during a Training Needs Analysis meeting between a Winsor Learning Consultant and the Leadership Team. The interaction resulted in the following conclusions:

People:

25% of the students at School A were students identified with a disability in 2006-2007. The school has an average of three classrooms per grade level and five instructional aides in the building. The teachers are well trained in research based reading programs but surveys reflected that teachers felt helpless to put the research to practice and socioeconomic factors made their jobs impossible, regardless of instructional quality. They also expressed serious doubts about differentiated instruction in small groups due to lack of knowledge and experience and uncooperative student behaviors. The instructional aids were also very well trained as reading interventionists. Two of the five have Orton Gillingham certification and all have some training in Orton Gillingham methods. The literacy coach has extensive training in curriculum based measurement and is proficient with the data management system. She is very driven to increase expectations, but sometimes had trouble communicating effectively with teachers. The school just welcomed a new, though experienced principal, who expressed concerns about the lack of instructional fidelity she witnessed as she observed instruction. She felt the teachers truly wanted to do well; they simply needed some help. The district is very supportive and regularly sponsors training for literacy coaches, teachers and instructional aides in programs that promote knowledge and skills for research based teaching.

Context:

State end of grade reading scores indicate that 54.1% of third to fifth grade students are at or above grade level in reading in this school. DIBELS is used to screen k-2 students for risk. The school has effective resources for both prevention and remediation. Teachers found it difficult to gather data to inform instruction. The literacy coach provided all the data and the teachers didn't know how to interpret scores and read reports. They found the data processes daunting and cumbersome. Progress monitoring was very inconsistent, partly because the teachers weren't monitoring on the appropriate levels. Teachers insisted that behavior was the main barrier to data based instruction. They had tried it and it didn't work. Students were regularly sent to the office for disciplinary issues.

Content:

The district provided materials based on science based reading research, including Harcourt Trophies and Wilson Foundations in Tier 1 and The Souday System and Read Naturally in K-2 and Language! in grades 3-5 for Tier 2 intervention. Though teachers had training in programs, lack of knowledge manifested into unsystematic picking and choosing without data to support instructional choices. Teachers resorted to individual seat work consisting mainly of worksheets stacked on students' desks in place of small group instruction. There was a lot of coloring, even in third grade. Teachers admitted that coloring was used to keep students busy while they tried to teach reading groups.

Process:

The literacy coach was assigned all the data management tasks including training, data entry, and reporting responsibilities. This decision was made due to a suspicion of unclean data being reported by some teachers. Teachers complained that they didn't have timely access to their students' assessments. The literacy coach was expected to support teachers with coaching, facilitating grade level meetings, and reporting to the principal, all while working on her own professional development sponsored by the district. In addition, she taught two ninety minute Language! classes each day. The school chose a direct referral approach in which students falling below benchmark were immediately referred to Tier 2. Almost half the students were being identified for Tier 2 support. The classroom teachers could not keep up with students leaving and returning to the classroom for remedial services.

Infrastructure:

In order to accommodate the remediation schedule, the ninety minute block was broken up into three disconnected thirty minute sessions. Due to over-identification, students assigned to remedial services were being seen only once or twice weekly. The planning schedule was designed so that meetings could be held consistently, but because of the process problems, data was not readily available for decision making and the meetings became opportunities for everyone to express their doubts about the system.

Questions to Consider:

The school clearly needed help. Were 25% of their students really learning disabled? Were the students so ill behaved that effective instruction could not happen? How could teachers integrate all their programs and training effectively? How was the literacy coach going to maintain all her responsibilities? Were teachers really inflating scores and, if so, why? What could be done to relieve the stress the people in this school were experiencing?

Planning and Implementation: Aligning Performance Domains

The principal called grade level meetings after the mid year benchmarks in 2008. She invited the consultant from Winsor Learning who had trained them in the Sunday System for intervention to help assess her school's situation and facilitate problem solving. The Winsor Learning consultant helped the staff identify their strengths as well their weaknesses. She then guided them to build on their strengths, sharing effective ways to make their own decisions to solve the difficulties. The first step consisted of identifying a vision. Where did they want to go and how would they get there? A Leadership Team, consisting of the Literacy coach and the five well trained instructional aids was appointed by the principal. The Leadership team met with the principal and the teachers (Delivery Team) and determined that the focus in year one would be on prevention in grades K-2. Alignment of resources began with that vision.

People:

Each K-2 Delivery Team recognized that they and their students were not on track and requested professional development in small group instruction. They knew they had good tools, but still expressed sincere insecurity about implementing an effective ninety minute block with direct instruction supported by teacher led small groups and independent centers. Teachers still had concerns about behavior and didn't seem to think that behavior problems would diminish once instruction was effective. Still, they agreed to try again. Research did not support the amount of remediation being delivered. The principal conducted walkthroughs and found that, indeed, training on small group instruction was needed. The Winsor Learning consultant was asked to lead three trainings over the next two months to increase core fidelity. She trained them to use the elements of effective reading centers described by the Florida Center for Reading Research and included the critical elements of small group instruction, using screening data effectively, incremental implementation of centers, and progress monitoring and planning procedures. The simulated practice session gave teachers the opportunity to experience the ninety minute block for themselves. The Winsor Learning consultant presented a fifteen minute "lesson" on implementing centers. K-3 teachers then broke into groups that met for fifteen minutes and rotated four times. At the "teacher led center", the Winsor Learning consultant motivated teachers. A video center showed a DVD on behavior management systems. The grouping center taught strategies to identify which students should be instructed together. The planning center consisted of resources for instruction and a sample lesson plan for teachers to complete. The session closed with an overview of the principal walkthrough to clarify expectations. Teachers were then responsible for executing the plans that they wrote in the workshop over the next three weeks. The Winsor Learning consultant returned after the three weeks and joined the literacy coach to monitor fidelity and make recommendations.

Context:

The teachers needed guidance on how to interpret their data. In a second meeting, The Winsor Learning consultant showed them which reports could be used efficiently for what and how to organize their class lists to inform instruction that would align with their goals. She taught them how to establish decision rules and document them in an efficient, easy way. People liked the paper and pencil method of data collection because it gave them access to errors. Error analysis worksheets and classroom spread sheets were used in the simulation workshop to get the data out of the booklets and into teachers' minds. These forms helped identify instructional flaws that affected all students.

Content:

The school had good tools. They just didn't know how to use them most effectively. For example, at the mid year benchmark meeting, kindergartners performed poorly on phoneme segmentation. The Winsor Consultant met with the Leadership and Delivery Teams asked them to share what they were doing in the core lesson. It was discovered that teachers regarded the phonemic awareness section at the beginning of the core lesson as a "warm up", so they regularly omitted it in order to cover the phonics concept. The Winsor consultant showed them how to teach that concept more intensively using multisensory instruction and strategies to increase student response, since they were now "behind" in this skill. The teachers, with additional resources provided by the Leadership Team, rectified this quickly by intensifying the instruction as suggested and scores quickly improved.

Process:

Classroom teachers wanted control of their data and a compromise was devised. Everyone would attend an inter-score agreement meeting to ensure as clean a collection as possible. The Leadership Team would benchmark. Progress monitoring would be conducted by the small group instructor and scores entered by the classroom teacher. The hope was that the "cheating" would cease once everyone truly understood the context. Just to be sure, the literacy coach posted a progress monitoring schedule in her office to track implementation. The teachers agreed to move from a direct referral approach, to referral to tier two based on progress monitoring and validation of need in tier one small groups over eight to ten week periods. Each grade level devised a plan to make activities from the Florida Center for Reading Research as part of their summer preparation.

After the fall benchmark, the Winsor Learning consultant returned to coach teachers as they analyzed, grouped and planned instruction. The Winsor Learning consultant helped the teachers in each grade level find “GO”, or the instructional starting point for each student. Teachers then wrote lesson plans accordingly, and agreed to submit the small group plans to the principal and the literacy coach every two weeks. The instructional aids formed a support team to distribute the activities and materials that had been gathered over the summer. The literacy coach provided additional coaching and modeling in assessment and instruction as needed over the next six weeks.

The Winsor Learning consultant returned after six weeks to check on progress and provide additional support. The submitted lesson plans and progress monitoring data were used to assess instruction in K-2 classrooms. A meeting with the principal revealed what had occurred at the faculty meeting the day before. She questioned teachers about where they were sending their students for discipline, since misbehaved children were no longer coming to her office. The teachers hesitated, she said, before admitting that they were no longer really experiencing any problems with behavior. The students were really enjoying the new system because they had meaningful activities that kept them engaged. It wasn't perfect, of course, but both she and the teachers were surprised by how quickly this development came to pass.

Infrastructure:

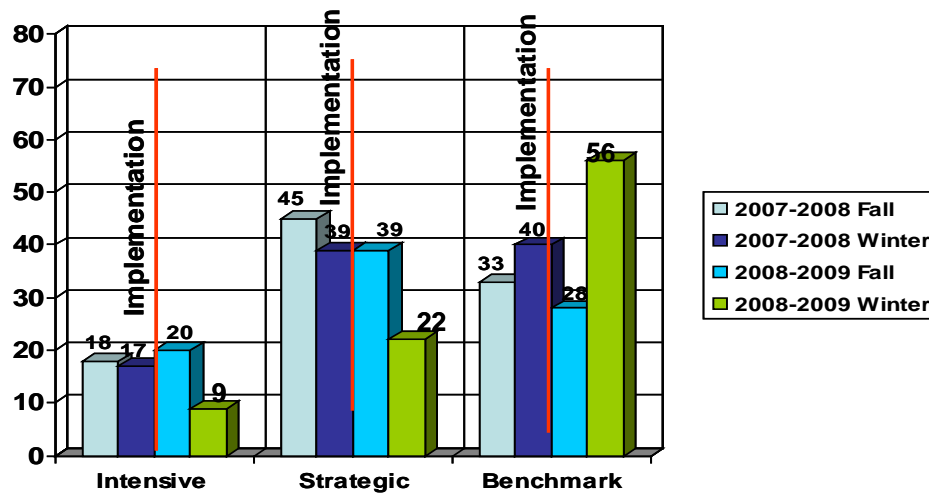
The principal scheduled the reading block as a secure ninety minutes. To serve the needs of students still in remedial pull out settings, a forty-five minute enrichment block was added to the school day and the instructional aids were assigned to help with instruction. Teachers were retrained on the data management system so they could perform their new task of data entry.

School A's Results:

Student academic performance improved and so did behaviors. Students identified with a disability are now only 13.3% (down from 25%) of the student body. The students actually look happier than the way they had when coloring and seat work predominated their independent practice. They are engaged and well behaved, cooperating with the management strategies taught during the planning period. Teachers began to use their data to understand where their students were and where they needed to go in order to succeed in reading. Discoveries that helped them work smarter, not harder, fueled their motivation. Resource teachers are beginning to focus their attention on the students who need it most. The literacy coach has time to mentor teachers and provide resources in an efficient, supportive manner. The principal is not tied up all day with frustrated students and disgruntled parents.

The school is reevaluating to improve their model. The next steps include adding a classroom teacher per grade level teacher who now has the knowledge, skills and motivation to serve on the Leadership Team and removing instructional and organizational scaffolds when they are no longer needed. The use of support staff needs to be incrementally shifted from the younger grades as teachers become more proficient, so that these resources can be applied to remediation of older students that are still considerably behind. Teachers, and especially students, are more successful and happier. Graphical results follow:

Case Study Sample of School A's Results



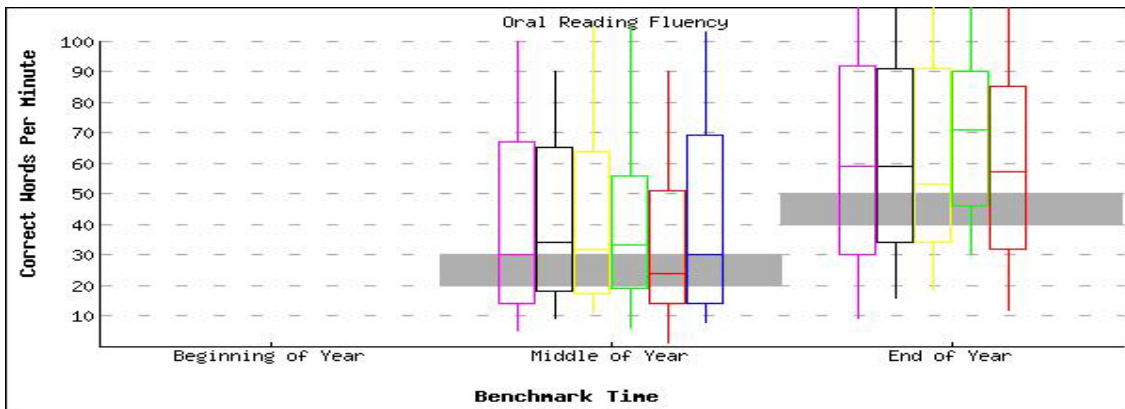
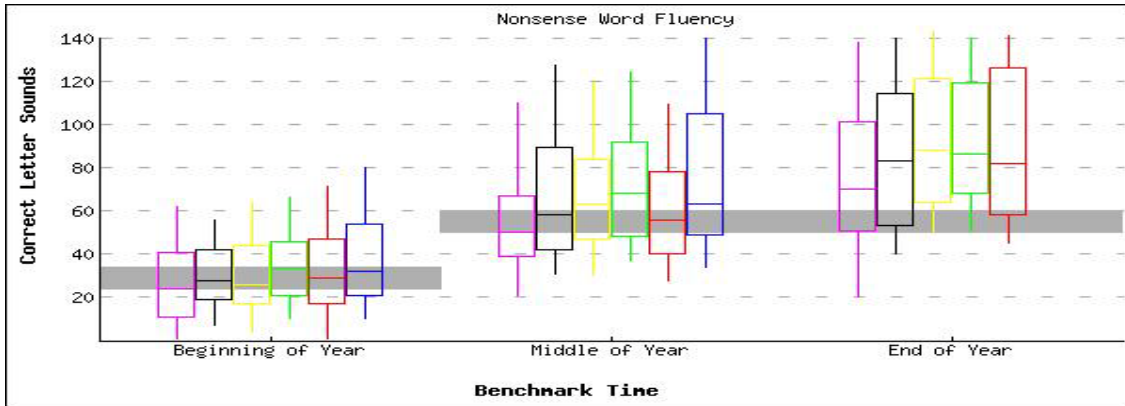
DIBELS – Instructional Recommendation Counts

The planning phase began in the Winter of 2008 (dark blue).

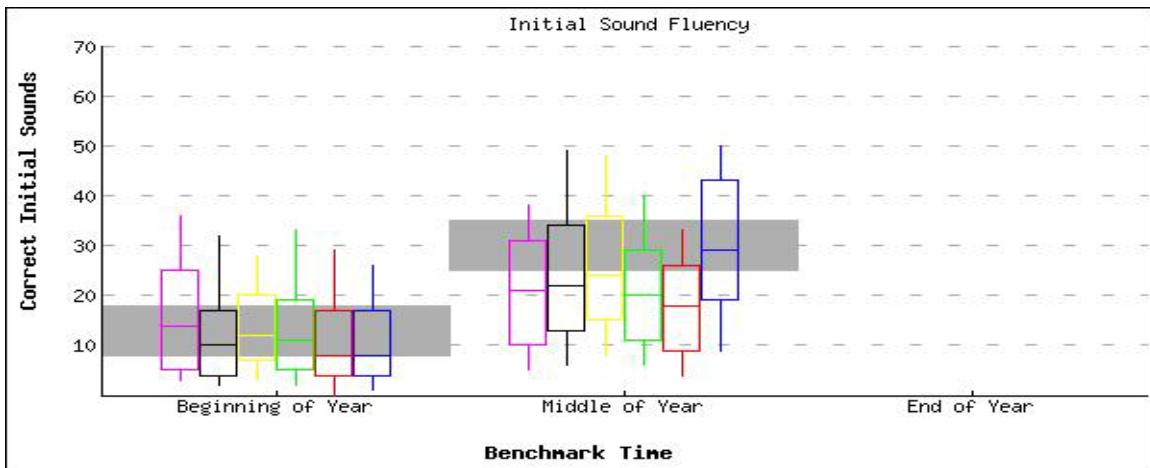
This is a graph of kindergarten results at the last benchmark in January 2009.

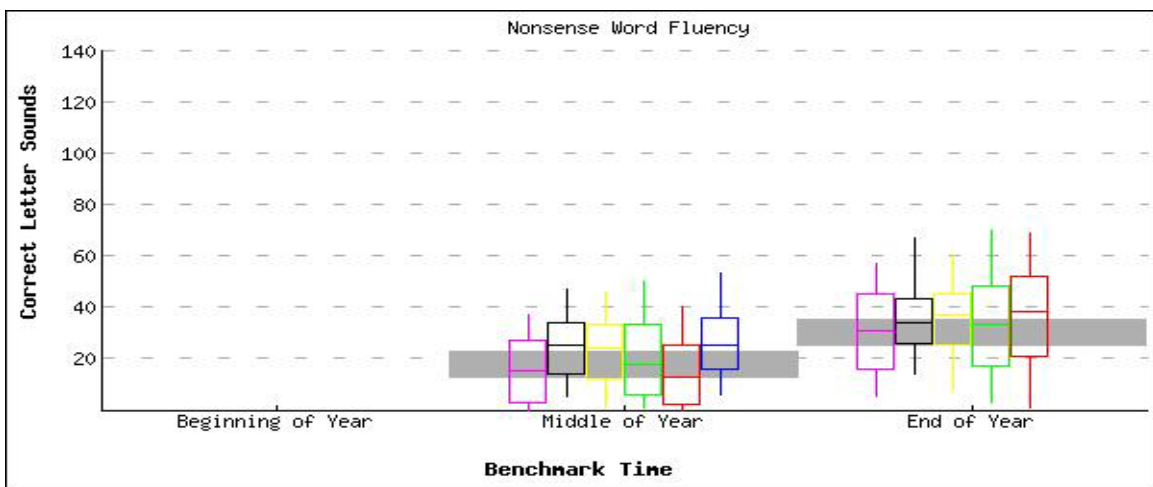
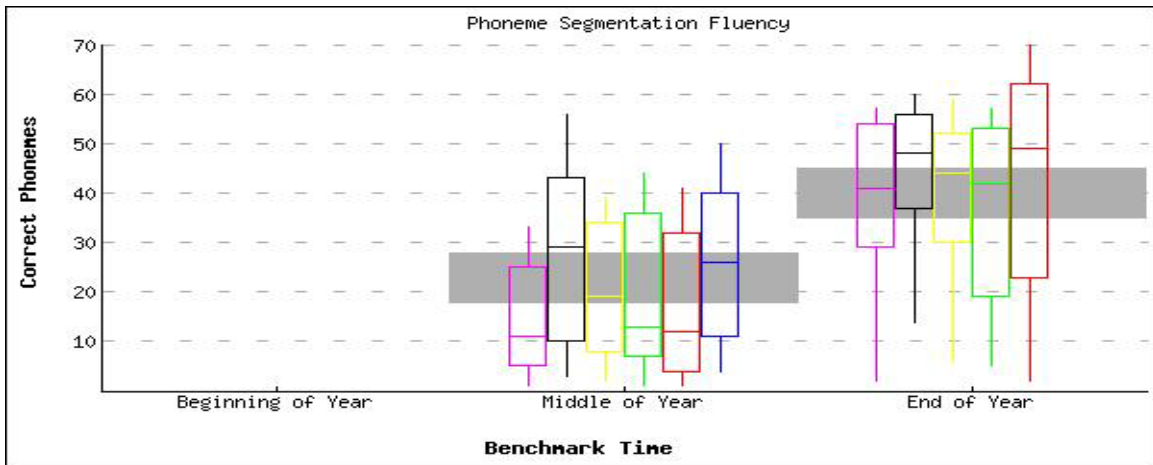
Cross Year Box Plots:

Grade 1



Kindergarten





References

Chhabra, Vinita. (2006). Building Capacity to Deliver Multi-Tiered Reading Intervention in Public Schools and the Role of Response to Intervention (RTI). *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, Volume 32, No. 5, Special Edition 2006, 40-46.

Davenport, Thomas H., and Lawrence Prusak. 1998. *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Good R.H., Simmons D, Kame'enui E, and Chard D, (2003, December),
Operationalizing Response to Intervention in eligibility decisions. Paper presented at
the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities Responsiveness to
Intervention Symposium Kansas City, MO.

For additional copies of this document please visit

www.winsorlearning.com/site/resources

Or go to www.winsorlearning.com and click on Resources then Document Library.

© 2008 Winsor Learning, Inc. All rights reserved. The contents of this document are the property of the publisher, Winsor Learning, Inc. Information contained within this document cannot be reused, reprinted without consent of the publisher.