

## Idaho school's RTI strategies reduce frustration, special ed referrals

### Accelerated Math, MathFacts in a Flash are part of West Park Elementary's RTI equation

Before Response to Intervention (RTI) was around, obtaining special education services for struggling students was like pulling teeth—often, only failing students who fell far below the rest of the class would receive proper intervention.

Idaho has maintained its presence in the forefront of special education reform, beginning six years ago with its Results Based Model (RBM). "It has now transitioned into RTI over the past three years, and the West Park Elementary team has transitioned with the state requirements," said Kris Curnes, third-grade teacher at West Park Elementary in Moscow, Idaho.

By changing the way teachers utilized existing resources, the school effortlessly transitioned into its RTI routine with nary a hiccup. "We use Accelerated Math and MathFacts in a Flash for weekly progress monitoring," Curnes said. "The reports that each of these programs generate make progress-monitoring simple and concise."

West Park Elementary also uses Accelerated Math Diagnostic Tests and additional district-normed assessments three times per year as a baseline to identify problem areas earlier and to chart progress. "Probably the teachers' biggest complaints were that we were taking state tests in October, and we weren't getting results until March or April," she said. "By then, it's too late to do anything. As much assessment as we can do within our own classroom, the better—and we get the results immediately!

Within seconds, I have information that means something to me. That immediate feedback is crucial!"

Accelerated Math and MathFacts in a Flash are used at West Park to generate



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practice materials, and to identify specific objectives in need of intervention, which satisfies both Tier I and Tier II requirements for Idaho. "Accelerated Math tests are used for progress monitoring, while the Accelerated Math practices are used for instruction, re-teaching, and additional practice. MathFacts in a Flash is used for computation intervention."

With its RTI strategies set in place, West Park has decreased the percentage of students referred for special education services over the past three years. "We are really starting to see our numbers reduce as we find success with the RTI interventions. Our teachers are finding ways to group students based on specific intervention

needs," she said. "We are catching the 'trouble spots' early, and students are not falling between the cracks."

Three years ago, of the 240 K-3 students, 14 were referred for special education testing. "Last year, we were down to three completed referrals, with two of the students qualifying, and one student moving out of the district," she said.

Though the length of intervention varies for each student, West Park teachers initially monitor students' progress for three successive weeks. "We try to run a specific intervention for 8–10 weeks, unless a team decision is made to change the intervention or increase the goal based on progress monitoring data," she said. "We are finding that after the intervention, those kids are often catching up, and many times, they were just missing a small piece. If we are able to catch it earlier, we do not have to refer as many kids."

Utilizing tools the school already had has made RTI practices more efficient. "The beauty of using Accelerated Math and MathFacts in a Flash, in conjunction with RTI, is the management side of things," Curnes said. "We can pinpoint specific skills and objectives to target, and then print the materials that are an exact match. As a teacher, I'm not scrambling to find materials in several places—it's all right there!" ■

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