

**St. Mary's Academy Charter School
Beeville, Texas**



TRANSCRIPT: "READING"

STAN SIMONSEN, PRINCIPAL/SUPERINTENDENT: We already had begun to make changes based on everything we had read from the reading academies. We brought in interventionists to pull the kids out in small groups and to give them instruction. We paid for that with state comp-ed money and Title I money and we had set up a reading program, but when Reading First came available, and we applied, we just transferred the program we already had onto the Reading First application. We made a commitment that was going to be our core foundation of our academic program, that we were not going to give up the interventionists, we were not going to give up our Reading First coach. So we would do whatever else we had to do. We'd make any other adjustments that we had to make to keep that.

ALICE WHITLEY, K – 3 READING COORDINATOR: They then have allowed us in budgeting that we still have our same two reading intervention teachers. Our classroom teachers have that support; they have that outside help. Those children can receive that additional 30-minute reading instruction a day as well as then the classroom teachers can serve the children in the classroom. The progress monitoring continues. That is a very solid foundation for us. We are very comfortable with it; we know it works. Our students know it and understand even the fact that they are going to be pulled out for a small-group session. They are not embarrassed by that. Many of them wish that they could go whether they need it or not, they would like that opportunity. It's a very worthwhile managed program. I really talk up the interventionist to the classroom teachers. I can pretty much promise them if they walked away from this campus, they are not going to have that anywhere else. That is very unique.

OLIVIA DELEON, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER: We have Debbie Brown, who is our interventionist, who will pull them out when they first get tested. The ones who do not score where they need to score get put into a tier II program where she will pull them out daily and work with them for 30 to 45 minutes. Also during center time I will pull groups aside. Also I have a para that will work with groups.

DEBBIE BROWN, K – 1 READING INTERVENTIONIST: We try to meet each child where they're at; each one is individual, so you can't have the same lesson plans. And the way that we figure this out is through the progress monitoring at least every two weeks. I personally like to keep the groups as small as possible. We have them usually five times a week, once a day and around 45 minutes. I like to also try and talk with the classroom teacher on a daily basis and look

at their lesson plans. I feel we have the best teachers in the world here. I don't really like to do the same thing over and over again, because if they didn't learn with those teachers then I feel I need to do something different. So I try and teach the same concepts in a different way.

HIRMA ELIZONDO, 1ST GRADE TEACHER: Mostly what I see with those students is that they're really not practicing at home. I try to be the go-between home and school. At the same time, I can see the parents in the afternoon and have contact with them because of course they're coming in from work and I see them at that point. That's a good time to catch them and say "I'm seeing this problem, can we maybe work a little bit more?" I always lend my phone number at home so that I can contact them and they can contact me at home.

NOREEN BROWN, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL: Our reading program in the upper grades, we continuously strive for excellence. Our children have reading for an hour a day, plus our fifth and fourth grade can have an extra 45 minutes, since our day goes from 8:00 o'clock in the morning until 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. When these children are assessed we put them into a tier, they have an extra 40 minutes of instruction and this is instruction in the very basic elements of reading.

ALICE WHITLEY READING COORDINATOR K – 3: Our assessment program is given at the beginning of the year, the middle of the year, and the end of the year. Mr. Simonson and I both felt like a classroom teacher's best time is in the classroom teaching, so he agreed with me that the interventionist would be doing the assessment. We felt like they worked with the students. They also are progress monitoring, and that's done every two weeks. They take those tier II students and pull them for a brief assessment. We have that information on the computer and we can pull it up and look at it and make sure those children are making the gains that we had hoped and if for some reason they are not, we can increase the amount of time. "Look, he or she has made wonderful progress." We can shift her back into a more direct teach and we can move this other little student out. Maybe he needs more intervention opportunity. So we feel like we are giving the students every possible learning opportunity to either be re-taught something or practice opportunity.

STAN SIMONSEN PRINCIPAL/SUPERINTENDENT: Reading scores in TAKS go from 75% of our kids passing on up to very close to 100% of our kids passing. And what is more important, initially we had 20 to 30% of the kids being commended on up, to now frequently we get over 60% of our kids commended. We hear from the teachers in the next grade level that these kids are very well prepared.

DAN PEARCE, UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR: St. Mary's in terms of their reading scores has ended up reaching a point where their scores on all tests measures were very good, which is the reason they became a Blue Ribbon and exemplary. They are keeping what worked and adding a couple of other components. One is children's literature. Read-alouds had all but vanished. They were used intermittently. Some teachers read but it wasn't consistent. We've put it in where it's 3 times a day and the teachers are enjoying it. We are seeing a change where students are talking about books again.

I don't care what scores they are, if they come out illiterate, not wanting to read—and I don't just mean books, but I mean the desire to read to gain information—there is something wrong and that is permeating across the grade levels. The second change is comprehension, reading for understanding and that is an ongoing process.

CARRIE SHIPP, SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER: The access to the books is just fantastic. We have books on tape and books on CDs. You can check anything out. Our philosophy here is, if you take a book and you don't bring it back, we know someone in the home is going to get to use it.

We are reading a book now called *The White Giraffe*, and it's an African story, and so the dialogue has all these different accents. And they are very intrigued by that because most of them have never left this area. What did this one little girl say? "You have take us to a lot of places we would never go!"

VOICE OF A BOARD MEMBER: My daughter is autistic and she came to St. Mary's not reading. She came from public school not reading and she sits down and she reads all the time now. So we've gone from a non-reader and this is her third year here, from a non-reader in three years to a reader. It is because they can spend additional time. They have their reading time but because of the way the school is structured, they can spend an extra 60 minutes or more if she needs it on her reading and now she reads.