

Reading Assessment Plan for Arizona Charter Schools

Name

Institution



### **Review of the Reading Assessment Plan for Arizona Charter Schools**

Most charter and district schools in the United States rely heavily on the reading assessment plans to assess and diagnose the students in the elementary grades that experience reading difficulties. Leading Edge Academy is one of the charter schools in Arizona that adhere to the same practice. Leading Edge Academy follows the regulations and standards outlined by the Arizona Department of Education in the development and implementation of its reading assessment plan. Fundamentally, the academy deploys the reading assessment plan in its four constituent elementary schools located in the Phoenix valley area. Arizona Department of Education requires every Arizona chartered school to prepare a comprehensive reading assessment plan according to some specific rules and standards that are meant to harmonize the manner in which students are assessed their reading skills in Arizona (Arizona, West Group & West Publishing Company, 2009).

Firstly, Arizona charter schools are required to perform a universal assessment of the reading skills to all K-3 students within the first four weeks of opening the school. Essentially, the schools are required to utilize universal evidence-based tools to identify the students that are at risk of encountering reading difficulties. Leading Edge Academy complies with this requirement by assessing the students using Galileo standardized tests, which are offered at the beginning of the school year. According to the standards outlined by Arizona Department of Education, the diagnostic tool must measure one or more of the five essential elements of early literacy that include phonics, phonological awareness, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency (Arizona, West Group & West Publishing Company, 2009). Subsequently, the academy determines which students to place into Response-to-Intervention (RTI) based on the test scores of each student.

Just like the Arizona Department of Education recommends, the academy identifies the students that need intervention within two weeks from the date of the standardized test and places them into intensive and strategic groups. The academy then utilizes progress monitoring tools including the running records, DIBELS, and fluency reads. Although several students might be in the same RTI group, each student is monitored individually to ensure that all students improve on their reading skills. However, the RTI groups keep changing as students continue to demonstrate their progress in reading skills. The academy places the students that are likely to be at risk in the intensive RTI group, while the students that may be at risk fall in the strategic RTI group. Each RTI group is assigned an interventionist who monitors the progress of each student and present that information to the classroom teacher to determine which students to remove from the RTI groups. At Leading Edge Academy, students sit for Galileo testing again in the middle of the school year. Consequently, RTI groups are formed based on the scores of each student. At the end of the school year, Leading Edge Academy gives the students another Galileo test to measure the achievements and improvements made throughout the year.

Sincerely, the reading assessment plan for Leading Edge Academy bears both the strengths and limitations. The first strength of the reading assessment plan is the fact that the baseline assessment assists the school in setting attainable goals at the opening of the school year. For instance, Galileo tests that are offered at the commencement of the school year assist the academy in identifying students' weaknesses and strengths early. Hence, the teachers are able to target specific areas that require improvement. Secondly, the reading assessment plan involves the students in the planning process and goal-setting, which leads the academy toward success. Certainly, the students are the key stakeholders in planning for their own education in the reading assessment plan because the plan depends on the students' input (National Reading Panel, 2000).

However, the reading assessment plan exhibits some limitations. One of the limitations is that the plan endorses evidence-based assessment tools to identify the students with reading difficulties. As such, the assessment tools including the Galileo tests do not provide exemptions for students with test anxiety (National Reading Panel, 2000). Seemingly, a student might score low in the standardized tests because of mere test anxiety.

Indeed, there exists a comparison and contrast between the reading assessment plan for Leading Edge Academy and the recommendations delineated in the Spear-Swerling and Cheesman article. Just like what the article recommends, the academy makes use of evidence-based standards and tools that are reliable and valid to assess students' reading skills. In particular, the academy utilizes the Galileo testing to diagnose the students with reading difficulties, which is scientifically proven to be a reliable and valid assessment tool for students in the elementary grades. The article recommends the schools to use reliable and valid assessment tools so that reliable and substantive information about each student is obtained before placing them in intensive interventions. Additionally, the academy heeds the recommendations in the article that urges the schools to allow only the trained professionals to administer the assessments. The interventionists at Leading Edge Academy are highly-trained professionals that are capable of monitoring and measuring the progress of each student in the RTI groups. The article states that experienced professionals in administering the assessments are better because they contemplate and scrutinize the kind of reading skills being tested in the assessments to determine whether the assessment tool is valid and reliable at a particular grade.

However, the Arizona Department of Education lacks evidence-based procedures and standards for verifying and validating reading assessment program implementation in schools (Arizona State Agency Fee Commission, 2016). The deficiency of these procedures contrasts

with the recommendations found in the article. Specifically, the article recommends adoption of procedures for validating and verifying reading assessment programs for every school. These procedures could assist Arizona Department of Education to ascertain that indeed the schools used the valid and reliable reading assessment tools as documented in their annual submissions.



## References

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