the Wolf School

Social Thinking in the Immersion Model

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Introduction

The Wolf School created an Immersion Model whereby therapeutic support (i.e., speech-language, occupational) is embedded within the curriculum. The classroom teacher presents the academic concepts and objectives from the core curriculum. The occupational therapist and speech-language pathologist then incorporate individualized goals within related academic activities. Many supports and strategies are utilized throughout each school day and may include:

• Movement at least every 90 minutes
•Routine & Visual schedule
•Frequent and Consistent positive reinforcement
•Behavior and sensory supports

This paper discusses the implementation of the Social Thinking (Winner, et al.) framework as part of an Immersion Model. Students' progress specific to Social Thinking assessment and intervention will be reviewed.

Social Thinking Curriculum

The Wolf School uses a school-wide curriculum adapted from Social Thinking (ST) concepts created and developed by Michelle Garcia Winner and colleagues. ST is a treatment framework that targets individual social thinking abilities. At the Wolf School, ST is integrated throughout the day to expand students' understanding, awareness and generalization of the concepts. The entire faculty knows and uses the vocabulary with students across the school day.

Methods

In order to assess the impact of ST in the Immersion Model, twelve students were assessed and re-assessed over a 3 year period using the Understanding and Awareness and Demonstration Rubrics (Winner et al.).

Understanding & Awareness

1 = No understanding/awareness
2= Emerging awareness
3= gives examples of others' use or misuse
4 = solid understanding, explains own use or misuse

Demonstration:

1 = Limited demonstration, moderate prompts
2= Demonstration with minimal prompts sustained briefly
3= Demonstration with few cues or in structured environment
4= Demonstration without cues and generalizing outside

Results

Student Growth on ST Rubric

- 8.0% 1 Pt. Rubric Growth
- 16.6% 2 Pts. Rubric Growth
- 16.6% 3 Pts. Rubric Growth
- 8.0% 4 Pts. Rubric Growth
- 33.0% 5 Pts. Rubric Growth
- 8.5% 6 Pts. Rubric Growth
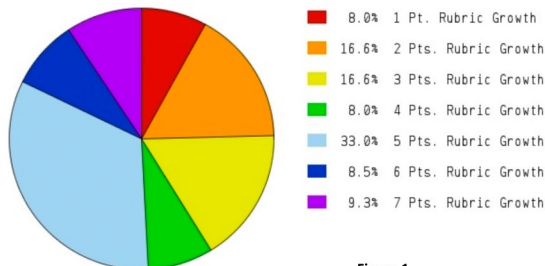- 9.3% 7 Pts. Rubric Growth

Figure 1

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Discussion

Analysis of results demonstrated growth at various levels on the ST rubrics. Growth ranged from 1 to 7 points. Ten out of 12 students moved from the Understanding to the Demonstration Rubric. Eight percent of the students demonstrated 1 point of growth, 16.6% of students demonstrated 2 points of growth, 16.6% demonstrated 3 points of growth, 8% demonstrated 4 points of growth, 33% demonstrated 5 points of growth, 8.5% demonstrated 6 points of growth and 9.3% demonstrated 7 points of growth. Please refer to Figure 1 for a visual representation of this description.

Conclusion

Results suggest that an Immersion Model, coupled with direct ST instruction and ongoing assessment is beneficial for students with challenges in social pragmatics. With direct teaching of these concepts and carry over throughout the day, each student made positive gains in his/her targeted social skill areas. Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the subjectivity of the assessment rubric. Future research will focus on the further development social-pragmatic language skills within the Immersion Model.

References

Best, R.E., and Khouri, A.L. (Poster Session, ASHA 2012). The Immersion Model.
Winner et al. (2010, June 4). Thoughts on Assessment and Data Taking. Retrieved from http://www.socialthinking.com/what-is-social-thinking/michelles-blog/391-thoughts-on-assessment-and-data-keeping

Acknowledgements