The TaRL Experience: Challenges, Practices, and Recommendations

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of the teachers who implemented Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) in the City Schools Division of Cavite to understand their perceptions, the difficulties they encountered, and the practices they employed in response to the identified challenges, with the ultimate goal of developing TaRL implementation recommendations. TaRL is a globally recognized remediation strategy that groups learners according to their competency levels rather than age or grade levels to address gaps in foundational skills. Using a phenomenological approach, the study gathered data that revealed TaRL as an effective strategy for improving engagement, confidence, and student achievement. However, thematic analyses also revealed that time constraints and difficulties in group management and individual support were the challenges faced by the teachers. In response, teachers employed practices such as the use of manipulatives and visual aids and peer learning. These practices responded to the challenges in group management but cannot address the time constraints and the need for additional teachers. This study recommends the provision of ready-made lesson plans and instructional materials, increased contact time, smaller group sizes, and additional teachers and support staff for future implementation. Findings highlight the importance of contextual responsiveness, teacher empowerment, and policy support for a more sustainable and scalable TaRL implementation.

Keywords: Teaching at the Right Level, foundational learning, teacher experiences, instructional practices

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Introduction

Education in the global context faces an unprecedented learning crisis particularly in foundational literacy and numeracy. The inability to read and understand simple text by age 10, known as learning poverty, affects nearly 70% of children in low and middle-income countries as of 2023. This learning crisis could be attributed to the learning gaps brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even before the pandemic, many education systems already struggle with 57% of children in the aforementioned countries who are unable to read at basic proficiency levels (World Bank Group, 2023).

Failure to acquire foundational numeracy skills not only hampers students' chances to succeed in higher education but also poses limitations to what they can achieve economically, in the future. This poses a threat to these students' futures and to the broader context of national development and progress (Njie, 2016). Because of this, early-grade numeracy education is important as these are the foundation of students' academic and lifelong learning.

In response to the learning crisis, considering how crucial early intervention is when these learning gaps arise, Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) emerged as an innovative approach. TaRL went away from the traditional age grouping of students, and in turn assesses the students' learning levels and groups them accordingly, which allows for competency-based teaching approaches, regardless of age or grade level (UNICEF, 2023). This approach involves regular literacy and numeracy assessments, competency-based groupings, targeted instruction, and continuous monitoring to move the students to their appropriate groups based on competency (Lim, 2023).

TaRL is an evidence-based remediation strategy that is globally recognized. It was developed by the Pratham Education Foundation, and it is designed to address gaps in foundational skills by grouping the students based on their actual competency levels rather than their ages which determines their grade levels. It has yielded results, which is evidence of its effectiveness in accelerating the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills of those students who lag behind.

In the Philippines, where the learning crisis is deepening and has garnered attention from the academe, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, where school closures and class disruptions significantly affected learning outcomes, TaRL has grown in response (Angrist et al., 2024). The above-mentioned challenges and the resulting learning gaps underscored the limitations of normal classroom settings and highlighted the need for innovations that respond to the needs of the learners.

Because of its recognition on this urgent need, the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Cavite City initiated the implementation of TaRL, piloting last school year 2024 – 2025, as part of its commitment to ensuring that no Caviteño learner is left behind and that the interventions for improving learning outcomes are data-driven and context-specific. Below are the numeracy results of the pilot implementation of TaRL in SDO Cavite City:

Figure 1
Student Progress at School A

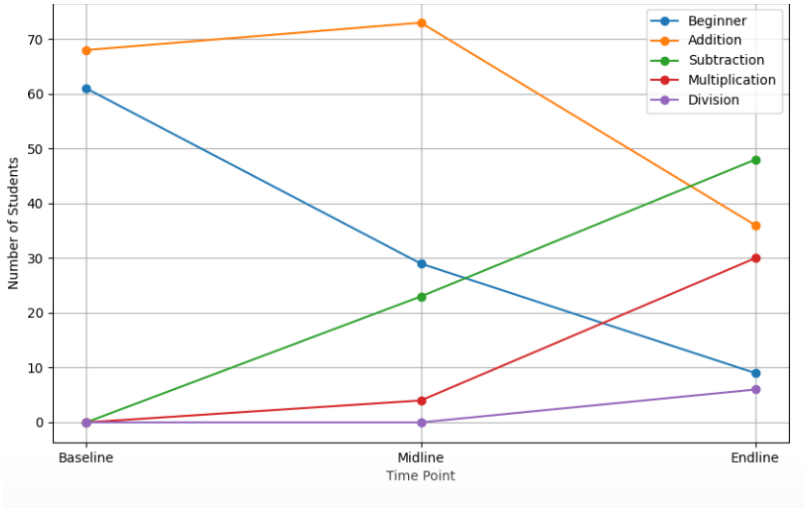
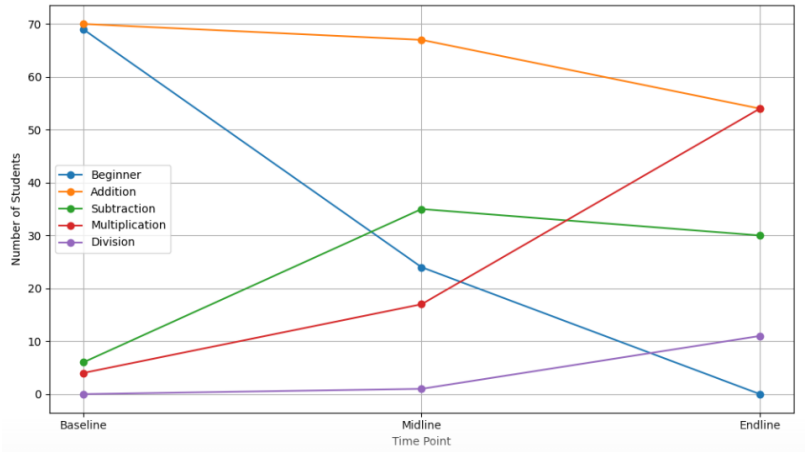


Figure 2
Student Progress at School B



While pilot implementation results reveal that TaRL had a positive impact in Cavite City in terms of numeracy, there will always be room for improvement. Further investigation is needed for a deeper understanding of the implementation from the lens of the teachers since the teachers are the main implementors of TaRL. They adopt the strategies in their teaching, navigate the difficulties, and innovate practices that respond to the challenges they encountered throughout the implementation, all to meet the needs of the learners. This study therefore addresses these important questions:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) in improving students' foundational math skills?
2. What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing TaRL strategies within the classroom setting?
3. What instructional practices and adaptations do teachers employ to deliver TaRL effectively in their respective contexts?
4. What TaRL implementation recommendations can be proposed based on the results of the study?

By exploring their experiences to understand their perceptions about the strategy, the difficulties they encounter and their practices to overcome the aforementioned challenges, this research aims to inform future improvements in the implementation of TaRL and contribute to how SDO Cavite City positions itself as a leading TaRL implementor in the Philippines.

Literature Review

Global Foundations and Evidence of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems worldwide. It negatively affected learning outcomes, including basic reading and numeracy, resulting from long-term school closures (Jack & Oster, 2023).

In a more recent study, Jakubowski et al. (2024) present learning losses of 0.11 to 0.33 SD in international reading scores, which is equivalent to more than a year of schooling, based on data from 2016 to 2021, attributing greater consequences to low-performing learners and in schools with extended closures.

Adding to the data on inequity, Tadesse and Muluye (2020) state that developing countries faced greater challenges in education during the COVID-19 pandemic due to a lack of infrastructure and limited access to technology that allows the conduct of alternative learning modalities.

Several international studies evaluated TaRL's impact under randomized controlled trials, further establishing its effectiveness in various contexts.

For instance, Banerjee et al. (2016) investigated the effectiveness and feasibility of scaling TaRL into government school systems. Anchored on the premise that TaRL establishes greater relevance based on the extent to which it can be mainstreamed and embedded within the educational system.

Maruyama and Igei (2022), in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Ministry of Education, assessed the effectiveness of community-wide support and TaRL in Madagascar.

Another TaRL adoption, Zambia's Catch-Up Program (Zambia, 2023), was implemented in close collaboration with education-focused organizations, including the Ministry of Education, Pratham, J-PAL (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab), and TaRL Africa.

Botswana-based health and education-focused organization Youth Impact also supports TaRL and its delivery in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and the Philippines, among other countries (Angrist et al., 2024). Based on Youth Impact's large-scale randomized controlled trial in Botswana in 2022, involving 17,622 learners from grades 3 to 5, the TaRL numeracy program yielded significant learning gains.

Although TaRL has been adopted in various contexts worldwide, its core principles continue to guide its implementation. TaRL consistently applies level-based grouping, targeted instruction, and continuous assessment and monitoring (Angrist et al., 2024; Teaching at the Right Level Africa, 2025).

Implementation Enablers and Barriers in TaRL Programs

An examination of various large-scale TaRL implementations reveals key factors affecting the success of the program. Comprehensive teacher preparation, active community engagement, strong and committed leadership, and well-functioning monitoring systems all contribute to TaRL scaling successes. These elements, when present, create enabling conditions to implement the program with fidelity and sustained impact.

Lipovsek et al. (2023) highlight the crucial role of strong government ownership in successfully scaling TaRL within Zambia's public education system. Intensive teacher training and mentoring boosted educators' confidence and ownership of the program. Contextualizing and localizing the approach improved its relevance and feasibility.

Similarly, Lebanon's TaRL pilot implementation presents that robust teacher preparation—including an intensive two-day training followed by ongoing support—and active community involvement were key to its success (World Bank, 2024).

While identified key factors have contributed significantly to the success of TaRL, scaling the approach to broader contexts presents its own set of challenges that require attention.

Commonly observed, limited instructional time and rigid school schedules restrict effective delivery of TaRL. Teachers balance the demands of the regular curriculum with the TaRL implementation (Banerjee et al., 2016; World Bank, 2020).

Teacher capacity remains a challenge. In many contexts, the short duration of capacity-building efforts limits the integration and lasting use of these skills (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Finally, systemic and policy impediments hinder program sustainability. Rigid curricula, bureaucratic processes, and poor policy alignment can limit the flexibility TaRL needs to thrive (World Bank, 2018).

To address the earlier challenges, strengthening teacher capacity emerges as a fundamental step (Poverty Action Lab, 2025).

Equally important is fostering strong collaboration between schools, communities, and education authorities. Coordinated planning, where local leaders and caregivers are actively engaged, helps ensure that interventions align with learners' real needs (What Works Hub for Global Education, 2025).

Instead of depending on brief, one-time training sessions, expansion efforts are strengthened by ongoing, practical professional development that supports level-based instruction through consistent coaching and collaborative peer learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Poverty Action Lab, 2025).

Crucially, large-scale adoption is more sustainable when TaRL is embedded within policy frameworks and complemented by grassroots participation (Lipovsek et al., 2023; UNESCO IIEP, n.d.). In this way, scaling becomes less about duplicating a model and more about cultivating adaptable systems that preserve TaRL's core principles while responding to diverse educational landscapes.

TaRL in the Philippine Context: Policy and Programmatic Alignment

TaRL is shown to be a focused, time-sensitive program designed to address gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy skills for learners who lag behind their grade level (Hevia, 2024). This aligns closely with DepEd's priority for catch-up learning by providing targeted intervention to students who need it most, enabling them to "catch up" to their peers and build essential academic skills quickly and effectively.

DepEd has integrated TaRL with its broader education reform and learning continuity efforts in accordance with the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), which emphasizes learning recovery, flexibility in modalities, and quality education. The strong connection between TaRL's catch-up model and DepEd's reform priorities supports sustainable quality learning for targeted students and improves learning motivations as well (Ningrum, 2025).

Early efforts and pilot studies of TaRL in the Philippines involved key partnerships, including with Youth Impact and other stakeholders, Early efforts and pilot studies of TaRL in the Philippines have involved multiple partnerships and collaborative initiatives with organizations such as Youth Impact, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Ateneo de Zamboanga University, and other stakeholders committed as part of the effort to implement this targeted foundational learning approach in public schools (Lim, 2023).

TaRL also introduces increased inclusivity. By grouping learners by skill, not age or grade level, TaRL promotes inclusivity for learners who have fallen behind due to varied circumstances, including socio-economic disparities and interrupted schooling (Hevia, 2024). It also offers opportunities to support diverse learner needs within heterogeneous classrooms. On the other hand, teachers face difficulties in fully understanding and implementing TaRL's level-based, learner-centered approach amid existing curriculum reforms like the MATATAG curriculum.

Methodology

This study made use of the Phenomenological research method as it explores the essence of a phenomenon from the experiential perspective of the respondents (Bonyadi, 2023). This qualitative study aims to describe and understand the individual experiences of the teachers involved in the implementation of TaRL in SDO Cavite City. The researchers deemed it necessary to use phenomenological methodology as it best fits the study.

Phase 1 – Pre-data Gathering

The researchers secured all the permits needed to conduct the study. The documents were forwarded to SDO Cavite City and were signed and approved by the Schools Division Superintendent. Immediately after, the researchers convened and drafted the instrument to be used for the data gathering process. Different experts from different fields were consulted to make sure the validity and reliability of the instrument to be utilized. Upon revision of the instrument, the study proceeded to the data gathering phase.

Phase 2 – Data Gathering

When the data gathering instrument was finalized, the target participants were purposively identified specifically as the teachers who have experienced implementing the TaRL approach. The selected participants signed informed consent forms and were subjected to pre-interviews to assess participants' willingness and openness to deeply reflect on their experiences. The primary data collection method was a Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Phase 3 – Post-data Gathering

After the data gathering procedure, the research team convened and immersed themselves in the collected data. The researchers identified significant themes, subthemes, and significant insights that reveal meaningful aspects of the implementation of the TaRL approach. Validation of results were done through member checking during a formal meeting where the data interpreted was presented to the respondents in which participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the interpretations. Finally, a summary was synthesized to convey the essential and significant ideas of the research as interpreted in the results.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers complied with the permits necessary for the conduct of this research. An informed consent form was secured from the participants, discussing the objectives of the research, the sampling, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the absence of risks involved in their participation. Responses were coded to ensure that the participants remain anonymous. Lastly, this research complies with the Elsevier's Al author policy for use of generative Al and Al-assisted technologies, using AI to improve its readability.

Findings and Discussion

This study investigated the experiences of the TaRL teachers in SDO Cavite City to understand their perceptions of the program, the difficulties they faced, and the practices they employed to respond to these aforementioned challenges, with TaRL implementation recommendations as the end in mind. The results revealed a positive perception on TaRL because of its ability to increase engagement and its focus on foundational skills, which will be leveraged in the succeeding grade levels. Challenges include time issues, and practices incorporate contextual adjustments like peer learning. These results support the need for adjustments in time and additional teachers. The following themes are the results of the study:

Teacher Perceptions on TaRL

Teachers shared their experiences in their implementation of TaRL. These insights informed the investigation about their perceptions on TaRL and how it influenced their classroom practices and ultimately, student achievement.

Table 1
Themes on Teacher Perceptions on TaRL

Theme	Subthemes	Significant Insights
Increased engagement and increased confidence	Increased student participation	Learners become more cooperative and participative in the activities because concepts are taught in languages they understand.
	Boosted learner confidence	Their confidence grew as they experienced success in tasks aligned with their competency levels.
Significant progress because of learner-centeredness and a focus on foundational skills	Instruction tailored to actual learning levels Emphasis on core operations Sustainable learning gains	Teachers witnessed significant leaps in the skills of the students because of learning focus and a focus on foundational skills. These form building blocks for future learning.
Rewarding and empowering	Sense of fulfillment from student progress Increased teacher agency and responsiveness	Witnessing how the students progressed in terms of engagement, confidence, and achievement, teachers felt a sense of fulfillment.

Increased Engagement, and Increased Confidence

Results revealed that the teachers' experiences describe the results of TaRL with improved understanding, increased engagement, and increased confidence. Najah et al. (2024) reported the same by discussing that since the students are working on their competency level, increased enthusiasm, engagement, and level of confidence in expressing their ideas were observed. As one of the teachers shared, "I witnessed how TaRL played a major role in my learners' development. Their understanding of fundamental math skills deepened, and I could see their confidence growing with each activity."

Because the approach recommends that students ask questions and collaborate with peers, their confidence is boosted because of the enriched collaboration with classmates with the same competency level.

A more active participation because of this new-found confidence was reported by the teachers. World Bank Group (2025) highlighted this in the pilot implementation of TaRL in Lebanon, where students enjoy the interactive and collaborative activities which contributes to their confidence and ultimately, their engagement. One of the teachers had this to say: "My pupils showed genuine excitement during math lessons. They participated more actively and seemed eager to learn, which made the classroom environment more dynamic and positive."

A TaRL classroom is dynamic and empowering. It provides learning opportunities that respond to the needs of the learners without regard to their ages and grade levels. Since groups are responsive and flexible, students are prompted to participate more and engage better with their classmates, the learning materials, and the competencies being transferred.

Significant Progress Because of Learner-Centeredness and a Focus on Foundational Skills

TaRL organizes instruction and activities considering the current level of competence of the students. This is the learner-centeredness that TaRL offers. This is parallel to the findings of Rahmawati et al. (2025), when they discussed that a significant improvement in learning outcomes was observed because the approach addresses the heterogenous competency levels in the classroom. As one of the teachers said, "I witnessed significant progress in my students' math skills when instruction was tailored to their actual learning levels. This shift allowed me to meet them where they were, rather than where the curriculum expected them to be."

The progress that the students made under the TaRL approach is not a band-aid solution but rather a sustainable means to ensure that the students are successful in the succeeding years of their schooling. Akdi and Belamhitou (2024) supported this in their research on Moroccan education's focus on accelerating the learning of their students using TaRL. It was reported that TaRL targets the deep crisis in foundational knowledge among Moroccan students. A teacher from school A shared her experience about this: "Focusing on foundational skills made a noticeable difference. I saw how learners who previously struggled began to understand and apply basic operations with more confidence."

Similarly, a teacher from school B shared: "Teaching became more meaningful as I observed learners mastering the basics. The emphasis on core mathematical operations helped them build a stronger foundation, which reflected in their overall performance."

If done right, the progress is significant because it is impactful and is done efficiently within a short span of time. Because of the strategies that this approach employ, which are all simple and relatable to the students, the foundational skills, which will serve as the building blocks for future learning are built.

Rewarding and Empowering

Aside from the significant leaps in student achievement and confidence in learning, teachers also reported experiences about TaRL, being rewarding and empowering on their part. Akyeampong (2022) emphasized that TaRL empowers teachers by enabling them to employ more effective, inclusive, and learner-centered teaching practices. Because of improved understanding and confidence as well as significant progress shown by the students, the teachers feel rewarded and empowered. A teacher from school A shared that: "In my experience, students became more engaged during our sessions. I noticed a significant improvement in their ability to perform basic math tasks, which made teaching more rewarding."

Another teacher from school A also shared the same feelings when she stated that: "I felt empowered as a teacher to adjust my instruction based on what my students actually needed. This responsiveness led to real improvements in their understanding and engagement with math."

While the improvement on the students' achievements and confidence as well as the significant leaps they made in acquiring the foundational skills which shall form the building blocks for more complex competencies is a big win, it is also important to know that from the experience of the teachers, TaRL has had significant effects on them as well as they felt rewarded and empowered, witnessing how the students progressed, with the help they gave for these learners.

TaRL Implementation Challenges

The experiences of the teachers also revealed some TaRL implementation challenges that are crucial to how the program was delivered.

Table 2
Themes on TaRL Implementation Challenges

Theme	Subthemes	Significant Insights
Time Constraints	Short contact time	The teachers experienced not being able to finish some activities because of short contact time.
	Gathering students together shortens the contact time even more	Since TaRL is implemented as a remediation approach, the students come from their regular classes and gathering them presents difficulties.
Group Management and Individual Support	Students with different competency levels are grouped together.	Because of a shortage of TaRL trained teachers, there was a time early in its implementation where students of different competency levels are assigned to a single teacher.
	Shortage of TaRL trained teachers.	

Time Constraints

The results consistently report time constraints as the primary challenge that the teachers face in their implementation of TaRL. Lim (2023) stated that the instruction time under TaRL is 30 minutes per day only, which is not enough time to conduct regular classes, even more so, TaRL classes. A teacher from school A lamented that: "Time allocation has consistently been a concern in my experience. It often feels insufficient for the depth of instruction required."

This was also the same case in school B, evident when she shared that: "There were days when I couldn't carry out the planned activities because time simply ran out. It was frustrating to leave tasks unfinished."

This is the main challenge for the teachers. Given the major upside that TaRL has to offer, as well as the strides the students made because of this intervention, it is still important to note how better these students will perform if ample TaRL instruction time is given to them and their teachers.

Another challenge, as reported by the teachers, are the time constraints in terms of gathering the students together. Here is what a teacher in school A had to say: “Managing groups with varying learning levels demanded careful planning and close monitoring. The sessions often started late because students came from different sections, which further shortened our actual teaching time.”

This is the same case in school B. A teacher in School B had this to say: “The delays in assembling students significantly reduced the time available for actual learning. I often felt rushed and unable to maximize the session.”

This could be a challenge that is unique to the context of SDO Cavite City, given how it implemented TaRL. However, this will be significant in future policy recommendations if TaRL is to be implemented on a wider scale.

Group Management and Individual Support

Grouping the students presented a difficulty. This is contradictory to what Angrist et al. (2024) discussed that grouping the students should be according to learning level rather than age or grade. A teacher lamented that: “Early in the implementation, I struggled with grouping because the number of students in each teaching group was overwhelming, and their learning levels varied significantly. It was difficult to manage instruction effectively.”

This should not be the case. From the onset, the students should have been grouped according to competency level and there should not be students with varying competencies in a group. This is what one of the teachers shared: “When there weren’t enough teachers available, I had to combine groups and teach multiple operations at once. This made the sessions more challenging and less focused.” “These conditions made it hard for me to give each learner the attention they needed. With limited time and a large number of pupils, I often felt I couldn’t support everyone as much as I wanted to.”

Some challenges are external and cannot be controlled by the teachers like time, and some are internal and can be addressed like group management. Knowing these challenges, paired with the best instructional practices, can form meaningful TaRL implementation recommendations.

TaRL Instructional Practices

In response to the challenges reported, the teachers also applied certain instructional practices to adapt TaRL implementation to specific contexts.

Table 3
Themes on TaRL Instructional Practices

Theme	Subthemes	Significant Insights
The use of other manipulatives and visual aids	Use of other manipulatives like dice.	In relation to teacher resourcefulness, teachers got creative by using contextualized manipulatives like dice.
Peer learning	Pairing or grouping students so more advanced students can help the others.	In response to the group management and individual support challenge, teachers created smaller groups within their assigned classes.

The Use of Manipulatives and Visual Aids

The use of simple materials help the students be more engaged in the activities (Ahmed et al., 2024). Visuals and manipulatives make learning more interesting, and active participation increases, especially when these materials are accessible. A teacher from school A shared that: "Incorporating materials like sticks and stones into my lessons made the activities more engaging and accessible. These tools allowed me to connect with learners who struggled with traditional methods."

The same practice is being implemented in school B. A teacher in school B shared that: "Interactive and hands-on activities like matching number cards, stone throw, and stick bundling kept my students focused and actively involved in the learning process."

The use of manipulatives and visual aids resulted in more engagement and focus on the part of the learners. This is backed by Bakriev (2023) when he discussed that these manipulatives help learners create mental images of information and helps with understanding. As what the teachers said: "I found that using stick bundling for addition and subtraction helped my learners visualize the process more clearly. It made abstract operations more concrete." "Techniques such as stone throw, stick bundling, and the multiplication ladder proved to be highly effective. I saw how these visual and tactile strategies supported my students' understanding." "To teach place value, I had my students express numbers in expanded form. I also used dice and a target board to randomly select numbers, which made the lessons more dynamic and helped learners grasp the concept more intuitively."

To better help the students become more engaged and learn the concepts, the use of manipulatives and visual aids is an outstanding practice.

Peer Learning

In its early stages, the very foundation of TaRL, which is grouping the students in terms of their competency level was not fully achieved because of large groups of students since there are few teachers to handle the remediation. Peer learning is one of the strategies the teachers employed to respond to this challenge. As what one of the teachers shared, "Peer learning is also effective. I often pair or group students so that those with stronger skills can help guide others."

The teachers formed smaller groups within their classes to still form the competency grouping that TaRL promotes. After which, students with more advanced skills and understanding within the competency group share their learning to the other members of the group. Dehghani et al. (2014) supports the effectiveness of peer learning as they found significant improvements in student achievement after peer learning sessions.

The use of visuals and peer learning are the most outstanding TaRL instructional practices reported. These, paired with the challenges, can provide meaningful insights into how TaRL implementation can be further improved as an intervention strategy to address learning gaps.

TaRL Implementation Recommendations

Considering how challenges and the practices interact, some TaRL implementation measures are recommended.

Table 4
TaRL Implementation Recommendations

Theme	Subthemes	Significant Insights
Provision of lesson plans		Given the nature of TaRL implementation in SDO Cavite City, instructional goals do not differ from one teacher to another. Ready-made lesson plans may ease the burden of preparations, and the teachers can focus more on instruction.
Time and group size adjustments	Provision for more contact time for TaRL sessions	Teachers recommend giving more time for TaRL sessions to better teach foundational skills to the learners.
	Smaller groups of learners	Teachers recommend forming smaller groups of learners to better respond to homogeneity in the classroom in terms of competency levels.
Additional support and staffing	Additional teachers to handle TaRL sessions	Teachers recommend assigning more teachers to handle TaRL sessions. This is a call for management to train more teachers in teaching TaRL classes.

Provision of Lesson Plans

According to Abad and Hattie (2025), instructional materials and lesson plans are crucial not only for providing structure to the teaching process but also provides opportunities for ongoing

professional development and instructional innovation. This is also true for TaRL instruction. As what a teacher in school A requested, “Provision of ready-made lesson plans and instructional materials would be a great help.”

A teacher in school B had the same request. Here is her request: “Ready-made lesson plan and examples for all operations and more tips and techniques in teaching division level.”

Given the intervention nature of TaRL implementation in SDO Cavite City, instructional goals do not differ from one teacher to another. This shared goal opens doors for collaboration for teachers to refine teaching and ultimately, learning (Guo et al., 2025).

Time and Group Size Adjustments

TaRL sessions only last for 30 minutes (Lim, 2023). These sessions are supposed to be short and meaningful in terms of acquiring student competencies. The students are grouped according to their competency levels (UNICEF, 2023). This is to ensure that the groupings are homogenous and that instruction is targeted. However, in the initial implementation of TaRL in SDO Cavite City, these were not realized. Because of this, a teacher from school A recommended that: “I would suggest giving more time for TaRL sessions and reducing the number of learners per group.”

In school B, another recommendation was given by a teacher: “Mabawasan ang bilang ng mga bata bawat group. (Reduce the number of learners per group.)”

Jez and Wassmer (2013) discussed that there is a positive relationship between instructional time and student performance. Additionally, Antoniou et al. (2024) conferred that smaller class sizes promote positive behavior and engagement which results to better acquisition of learning. Both are applicable to the context of TaRL and how it is implemented in SDO Cavite City. If given more contact time and smaller groups, TaRL instruction will be more effective, and the students will gain more benefits.

Additional Support and Staffing

Additional support and staffing are crucial to any program implementation, especially in schools, because it creates a positive atmosphere and productive learning environments which are crucial for student success (Khalilpour, 2024). Teachers reported the need for additional teachers that will handle TaRL classes. As what one of the teachers lamented, “Sana nadagdagan ang mga magtuturo sa TaRL. (We hope there will be additional teachers to handle TaRL.)”

This informs policy about the need to train additional teachers that will handle TaRL classes. If there are more teachers to handle the classes, there will not be any gaps in terms of grouping of students and time constraints. This is one key element for a successful TaRL implementation.

The insights extracted from the experiences of the teachers revealed a deep understanding of the enablers and challenges of TaRL implementation as a remediation strategy. It was very clear that TaRL has led to significant improvements in student engagement and achievement. However, its accomplishments were somehow hindered by realities in time constraints, challenges in group management and individual support, and shortage of teachers. The

practices employed by the teachers demonstrate adaptability, innovation, and creativity, which reinforced TaRL as a responsive remediation strategy. These findings provide meaningful inputs to how program implementation and scaling can be further improved and inform future policy.

Conclusions and Implications

The findings of this study affirm that TaRL is a responsive and effective remediation strategy to address the learning gaps in early-grade Mathematics. The lived experiences of the teacher-participants report that TaRL resulted in increased engagement, confidence, and student achievement. These outcomes were achieved through targeted instruction and a focus on foundational skills which paved the way for meaningful and sustainable progress.

While TaRL proved to be an effective remediation strategy, in its implementation in SDO Cavite City, certain challenges must be addressed to ensure its sustainability and scalability. Teachers responded resourcefully to the challenges such as group management and individual support issues through instructional practices like peer learning. These practices not only supported student achievement but also empowered the teachers in their roles. However, persistent challenges like time constraints and the need for additional teachers remained beyond their control. These challenges highlight the need for policy-related interventions and adjustments to fully realize the potential of TaRL as a remediation strategy.

The findings point to several implications for future policy. Providing ready-made lesson plans and instructional materials will not only ease the burden of planning instruction and activities but also improve quality of instruction. This should advise management for future write-shops on TaRL lesson planning and instructional materials development. Provision for more contact time and adjusting the group size will also be beneficial for the TaRL learners. Most importantly, additional teachers and support staff will ensure that learners are grouped according to their competency levels and be given the instruction they need.

This study therefore calls for strategic policy intervention to make sure that the institutionalization and large-scale implementation of TaRL will be effective and more geared towards the achievement of the learners.

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