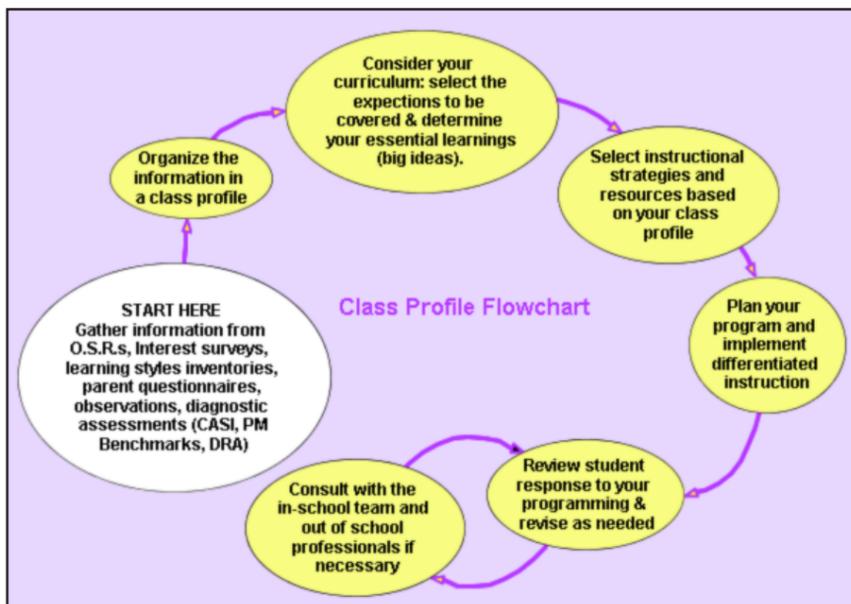
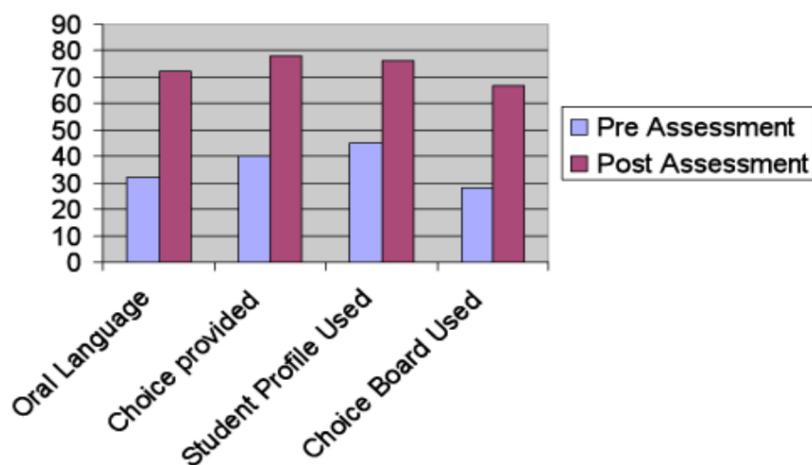


« Working and Learning Together, continued



Evidence of Success

- Increased collaboration among program support teachers and junior teachers
- Increased support by program support teachers of research-based strategies
- Alignment of knowledge and practice between classroom teacher and program support teacher
- Clear evidence that the Ontario curriculum is forming the basis of instruction
- Continuous improvement in student achievement, as evident in CASI data
- Consistent implementation of high-yield strategies from Education For All and Guides to Effective Instruction
- Gains noted in teacher capacity in the areas of oral language, providing students choice in both the process and the product of learning, the use of class profiles, and the implementation of Choice Boards
- Continued collaboration between Program Services and Student Services Departments
- Increased principals' capacity as instructional leaders



Conclusion

A key component to the success of this project was the team approach to improved student learning. Professional learning communities focused on the success of all students by collaboratively navigating the data, investigating curriculum expectations, exploring best practices, and using assessment to drive instruction. The teams reflected and revised as necessary.

As a Catholic learning community, our overarching theme was the dignity and worth of all persons. This lens through which we approached our work truly guided us to keep each child's needs and successes in the forefront.

Future Directions

- Expand the initiative to all teachers in Durham Catholic District School Board
- Embed the spirit and principles of Education for All in the Critical Learning Instructional Pathway
- Continue to establish collaborative practices between Program Services and Student Services
- Move toward more consistency in the use of best practices system-wide
- Ensure all schools are actively using student learning styles and class profiles as part of universal design for learning

Comments about this article? Email anne.O'Brien@dcdsb.ca or mariah.O'Reilly@dcdsb.ca

Re-Culturing for Change

Maria Esposito, Superintendent of School Effectiveness
Val Nott, Author
Huron Superior Catholic District School Board

The project was designed to address universal design, differentiated instruction, the use of assistive technology, assessment for learning, and the development of literacy. A systematic plan was put into place which allowed for regular focused meetings of the staff on a regular basis.

Teachers embraced the opportunity to grow together as a Catholic professional learning community (CPLC). They worked towards a shared vision. Following the development of learning profiles, they were able to collaboratively determine the next steps for the target students. Constructive criticism was no longer perceived as negative, and teachers worked closely with one another giving input, providing encouragement and challenging each other. Schools began looking for their own solutions rather than waiting for someone on the outside to parachute in and give them the answer. Staffs recognized that they were a team of experts and very often had the solutions within their reach. Their confidence in dealing with challenging situations increased tremendously.

Regular CPLCs also allowed the teachers to make connections and to have the rich dialogue to determine which job-embedded practices and strategies would be used between meetings. Much time was spent dialoguing on what worked, what didn't work, and what improvements could be made. Time was spent reflecting on teaching practices and their impact on student achievement.

The Education for All document was an invaluable resource for the project, and the schools did an in-depth study of this report. They studied the belief statements and made them a part of everything they did at the school. The belief statements were posted in a prominent place so they were visible to the staff, students, and parents. The schools lived and breathed the belief statements.

Educational assistants, learning resource teachers, and student support workers were integral parts of the CPLC. They were given training and worked closely with the teachers and students.

What were the results of this project? There were so many positive ones, and these far outweighed the negative. Teachers began to use and understand differentiated instruction effectively. Student achievement improved for all students and not only the target students. Students were more fully engaged in the learning process and the target groups showed less frustration. Organizational skills improved and negative behaviours decreased. Students increased their understanding of learning styles, including the target students, and they were able to advocate for themselves by recognizing what they needed to do and what could be done to support their learning. They appreciated the variety of choices they were given to complete their work and the opportunities for engagement. They also liked the fact that they were not withdrawn from the classroom. Assistive technology became a very important tool in the classroom.

As one teacher commented while reflecting at the end of the project, "I saw myself as a good teacher before this project. I am amazed at how much I have grown as a professional, and as a result, my students have improved. I can honestly say that I am a much better teacher. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this dynamic project."

In conclusion, this project allowed time for:

- Development of individual and classroom profiles
- Looking at students as our students rather than my students
- Reflective and professional dialogue at the school level
- Consolidation of many of the initiatives, with a focus on literacy
- Identification of our students who have the ability to achieve higher
- Development of regular Catholic professional learning communities (CPLCs)
- Tracking and monitoring of data of the target students
- Implementation of various job-embedded practices and strategies within the classroom, to benefit all students
- Increased knowledge of assistive technology and application software
- Increased professional development for both teachers and educational assistants
- Sharing of ideas and suggestions from one another
- Brainstorming to meet the challenges faced at a school level on a daily basis.
- Increased student awareness of their own learning styles
- Increased parental involvement in the learning process and understanding how they can better support their children at home
- Development of the foundations to allow for sustainability and capacity building

Comments about this article? Email mesposito@hscdsb.on.ca

The CODE Chronicle of the Northwest School Authorities

Fred Porter, Superintendent and CEO
Don Parsons, Author, Project Officer
Northern School Resource Alliance (NSRA)

The Northern School Resource Alliance is an educational consortium that supports isolated school boards, school authorities, principals, teachers, and community members in northwestern Ontario. The schools supported by the NSRA are isolated by distance, road and weather conditions. The member boards supported by CODE funding and the NSRA include the following:

- ATIKOKAN RCSSB, Atikokan, Ontario
- COLLINS DSA, Collins, Ontario
- CONNELL & PONSFORD DSA, Pickle Lake, Ontario
- CARAMAT DSA, Caramat, Ontario
- HORNEPAYNE RCSSB, Hornepayne, Ontario
- MINE CENTRE DSA, Mince Centre, Ontario
- NAKINA DSA, Nakina, Ontario
- NORTHERN DSA, Armstrong, Ontario
- RED LAKE RCSSB, Red Lake, Ontario
- UPSALA DSA, Upsala, Ontario

« The CODE Chronicle of the NSA, continued

The boards of the Northwest School Authorities are made up of one and sometimes two K–8 schools. Principals are often teachers as well as administrators and curriculum leaders. Teachers often teach multiple grades, with limited access to supports common to most teachers in the province.

The CODE project has had a profound impact on professional practice over the years. Instructional practice has improved. Gains have been made in student achievement. Teachers have access to current teaching and learning resources. Professional knowledge in areas key to student achievement continues to develop and progress, such as in oral language, Aboriginal learning styles, balanced literacy, differentiated instruction, universal design, assistive technology, and IEP writing.

In the first years of the project, one school was designated a demonstration school. The school received intensive support in implementing the evidence-based instructional strategies supported by *Education for All – The Expert Panel Report on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs*. Conditional to this support was the agreement of all staff members to host, demonstrate, and share their professional experience with visiting teachers from the other isolated schools in the northwest. This facilitated the networking of teachers across the vast geographical expanse of northwestern Ontario.

Concurrent with support to teachers was a focus on developing a professional learning community of principals. Investing in the professional development of the principals was key to the implementation of strategies that supported improved student achievement for all students but especially those with special education needs. The principals continue to be key to consolidating successful practices within and across the isolated school boards of the northwest.

The project was facilitated through the collaborative efforts of the project officers of the Northern School Resource Alliance. The expertise of the project officers across many educational domains was integral to the success of the project.

In the consolidating year of the project, schools used funding to provide release time for in school teams to meet in PLC teams to:

- Analyze student achievement data
- Develop programming for students with special education needs
- Make data-based decisions to identify and employ evidence based program instruction and interventions

The table below outlines some of the ways CODE project funding has addressed achievement for all students:

Principles	Strategies	Key Elements Addressed
Use of Student Achievement Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Web Based Teaching Tool from JK–1 • DRA implemented up to Grade 6 • CASI in senior elementary grades • Assessment schedule K–8 to inform instruction and determine interventions • Data walls developed • Analysis tools developed and distributed • Use of Tinker Plots to analyze and disaggregate student achievement data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning • Instructional leadership • Assessment • School organization • Communication
Teacher Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common resources provided to all schools on differentiated instruction • Demonstration school supported by project officers • Teachers from other isolated schools visit the demonstration school to see strategies in action. • Training on use of assistive technology linking with Thunder Bay Catholic DSB • On-site coaching on best practices for teaching literacy and numeracy skills • Regional conferences focusing on evidence-based instructional strategies • Inclusion of special education teachers in all literacy and numeracy training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning • Instructional leadership • Assessment • School organization • Communication
Alignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School effectiveness • OPA Student Assessment project (i.e., implementing the use of WBTT) • Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat initiatives • Aboriginal education • Model projects for student behaviour • Character education and safe schools • Student success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a principals' network • Regular teleconferences with the principals' network • Use of data walls to analyze student achievement • "I Know Who I Am" Aboriginal storytelling • Participation in Oral Language Assessment Project • Use of Wikispaces to connect isolated communities for ongoing collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning • Instructional leadership • Assessment • School organization
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web-Based Teaching Tool used in schools to identify early learning needs and interventions • Assessment schedule developed for JK–8 * • NTIP focus on best practices for literacy and numeracy instruction • Coaching school teams in use of data walls to improve student achievement • School Effectiveness Leader supports ongoing use of successful practices • Small school PLCs ... bringing staff from the smallest schools (i.e., one or two teachers) together for collaborative professional development • Nurturing relationships with regional school boards to access specialized training (e.g., assistive technology) • Use of Adobe Connect, Skype, and Wikispaces to maintain communication and progress • Collaboration with Student Success Leader and initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning • Instructional leadership • Assessment • School organization • Communication

* For information about the NSRA's "Student Assessment Schedule: Informing Instruction & Determining Interventions" ("Flagged" or "At Risk" Learners - JK to Grade 8), please contact Don Parsons, Project Officer at the email address below.

Intervention Planning Guide (Sample)

Student	Instructional Reading Level	Reading Behaviours What can the student do?	Goal What do you want the student to do?	Instructional Strategies What will we do? Strategies must align with goal(s).	Indicators of Success What will success look like?	Timeline How long will this intervention be?

Student Reading Profile (Sample)

Student Name	
Teacher / Grade	
Date	
Data Current Running Record	
Observable Reading Behaviours What <u>can</u> the student do?	
Primary Reading Concerns What does the student need?	<i>(Examples: fluency, decoding, comprehension, motivation)</i> 1. 2.
Intervention Strategies What have I tried so far?	
Instructional Strategies What does the group (team) suggest?	

The key to the success of the CODE project for the member boards and school communities supported by the Northern School Resource Alliance has been collaboration. Schools isolated by distance and weather conditions have demonstrated that with support, they can develop professional learning communities that have a positive impact on the achievement of all students. Schools are confident that with the ongoing support, the accomplishments outlined in the article will continue to progress. The skills, strategies, and networking abilities developed over the last four years will have a lasting impact on the achievement of all students. ●



Comments about this article? Email fporter@resourcenorth.ca or donpars@gmail.com

CODE Special Education Project 2005–2008; Implementation of Education for All, A Schools Attuned® Approach

Debra Krutila, Superintendent

Donna Zuccato, Author, Coordinator, Schools Attuned

Elana Gray, Author, Evaluation and Research Consultant, Gray & Associates

Peel District School Board

Introduction

Since 2002, the Peel District School Board has been a licensed provider for *Schools Attuned® to All Kinds of Minds*, a professional development program for educators. Based in North Carolina, All Kinds of Minds is a not-for-profit institute that provides educators and parents with up-to-date information and strategies related to the neurosciences. The *Schools Attuned* program consists of a 35-hour course and 10 hours of follow-up sessions or online modules related to the neurodevelopmental framework created by developmental pediatrician Dr. Mel Levine.

The Schools Attuned® program aligns with universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and the development of student profiles, all integral aspects of the *Education for All* expert panel report (2005). The content of the course is based on eight neurodevelopmental constructs along with their functions and components. The philosophy includes beliefs which support strengthening and leveraging students' strengths, enabling students to better understand their own learning, infusing students and parents with hope and optimism, and embracing diversity among learners. Several processes and tools to support effective instructional practices are taught during the program

For further information about the Schools Attuned® program, see: www.allkindsofminds.org.