

« Reflections on Implementing Change, continued

PLC formed a response to the question, "In what other ways can we support students with special education needs in the areas of literacy and numeracy?" Our CODE project participants quickly developed understandings that aligned with key beliefs identified within *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6*, specifically:

- All students can succeed;
- Each child has his or her own unique patterns of learning;
- Classroom teachers need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports students with special education needs.

Rethinking Our Project Approach

We made significant gains in our initial project approach by expanding each school's understanding of how to ensure that Individual Education Plans were followed by appropriate adjustments to classroom practice. This dialogue soon developed into a larger professional discussion about the personalization of instruction for all learners. As well, our project promoted a change in the culture of practice at each school. The CODE project asked participants to consider role definitions and role distinctions among professionals, as well as school-based processes that enhanced how each site could share expertise about meeting the learning needs of a wide variety of students.



What our project approach overlooked was the contribution and input that teachers from the Intermediate division—Grades 7 and 8—could readily provide and, in general, the focus for inquiry that framed the work of the site-based PLCs. The project management team realized that we interpreted the opportunity presented by Education for All too narrowly. Indeed, our interpretation was literally "by the book"; that is, we believed that the subtitle of the Expert Panel Report

(Kindergarten to Grade 6) was the limit for discussing the renewal and revitalization of our approach for addressing learner variance within our classrooms.

For us, the next critical step was to ensure that our project was broader in scope, such that Grades 7 and 8 teachers were included in the CODE discussions as full participants in the professional learning community's dialogue at each school site. The remainder of this reflection outlines our response to what Fullan (2005) describes as technical challenges and adaptive challenges associated with rethinking our project approach.

Adaptive and Technical Challenges

The type of work that now stood before the project management team related to "adaptive challenges." According to Fullan, "adaptive challenges concern problems whose solutions are not known" and where "solutions lie outside the current way of operating." Our teachers in Grades 7 and 8 reflect what Hargreaves (1993) characterizes as a "subject-matter orientation" that is reinforced by the very nature of the Intermediate curriculum and by some school-based structures such as the "rotary" system (where students receive instruction by moving from one teacher to another during a day divided into periods of instruction). From the project management team's perspective, our corresponding challenge was to connect professionals who were immersed in a professional culture defined by their subject specialization with the work of professional learning communities that had developed a dialogue shaped by the key learnings arising from Education for All which emphasized student-centred pedagogy rather than program-centred pedagogy.

In addition to adaptive challenges, our project team also faced what Fullan termed "technical challenges." Fullan reminds us that technical challenges equate to problem solving "that can be addressed through current knowledge or know-how." In this case, the project management team needed to identify how we could adjust our implementation model to be more inclusive of all classroom professionals from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

Our Response to the Adaptive Challenges

Our response to the adaptive challenge was to recognize the common ground between the professional cultures that existed within our schools, acknowledging that one program area had a long-standing subject-matter orientation by virtue of the curriculum and of institutional practices relating to program delivery. Our project management team set about to define a common culture of practice by drawing strong parallels between Education for All and the provincial Student Success initiative which has a shared emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction was our bridge between the initial dialogue already under way within professional learning communities and Intermediate division colleagues with teaching assignments in Grades 7 and 8.

The purpose of our first meeting with representatives of the various school-based PLCs was to make visible differentiated instruction in all types of instructional settings, including Intermediate division programs and rotary-style structures. Feedback from our Intermediate teachers indicated that this approach featured "good ideas to help bring the Intermediates on board" and that emphasizing differentiated instruction "helped the Grade 7 and 8 [teachers] reach the level of understanding of CODE." An Intermediate teacher commented after this initial meeting that "Intermediate CODE teachers need to get together to share and develop strategies for their classroom." A careful selection of resources that reinforced a focus on effective practice through differentiated instruction allowed for extension of our system-level project meetings to the PLC level with teachers from all program divisions. Resources authored by Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999 and 2001) were particularly valuable for their examples from the "middle grades," which resonated with Grade 7 and 8 teachers.

Our Response to the Technical Challenges

The project management team referenced Fullan, reminding us that transforming our behaviours and beliefs is based on progressive interaction that includes having ongoing

access to knowledge and building a "cumulative coherence." Having initiated a response that we believed would address the adaptive challenges defined by differences in school-based instructional cultures, the project management team recognized that overcoming remaining technical challenges was critical to supporting a transformation. We saw this as a convergence of our focus on differentiated instruction with a second focus on professional learning, which we came to view as "differentiated staff development." Our project management team learned that differentiated staff development featured the components that classroom professionals found valuable for nurturing growth in their practice. Indeed, one of the project participants with an Intermediate division assignment summarized what she saw as valuable: "(It was) time to work together that allowed us to get into things more deeply. The resources also helped when we looked at who our students were and what we could do to make them more successful."

CODE project funds provided release time for PLC meetings that included teachers from the Intermediate division. This aspect was valued by all participants, as evidenced by feedback received by the project team and by participants' comments in structured interviews conducted following the project. Project participants also valued the purchase of resources by in-school support teams to support the personalization of instruction. As one participant noted: "We could pick what would work for our students, not just what was valued in other schools."

These components were combined with a needs analysis form that the project management team designed to link the expertise of board consultants with the needs of each in-school support team. The survey asked, "How can the central CODE team assist you at your next CODE in-school meeting?" It is interesting to note that among the elements found within Education for All, the top four choices of school-based teachers included differentiated instruction and class profiles.

Lessons Learned

Our project management team and our in-school support teams have learned that the adage "Never judge a book by its cover" applies to our CODE experience. Our initial project design had overlooked the wider application of the Expert Panel Report to all grades, simply because the subtitle of the report identified its focus as "Kindergarten to Grade 6." Using the lens of effective practice and improved student achievement for all learners allowed us to approach the content of Education for All in a manner that led to a transformation in how we teach all learners within our elementary schools. ●

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Premier Assistive Technology and the OSSLT

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During the fall/winter of 2007–2008, a pilot project was initiated to determine whether using the Premier Literacy Suite software would improve first-time-eligible students' success rate on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

Historically, a high percentage of special-needs students had not been successful on the OSSLT. In particular, students identified with a Learning Disability (LD) or a Mild Intellectual Disability (MID) presented with the greatest risk of failure. Research indicated that this lack of success was primarily due to cognitive issues associated with LD and MID, which manifest themselves as a variety of print-related disabilities such as reading, processing, and comprehending written text.

The target population consisted of 16 students, 11 identified as LD and 6 diagnosed as MID. A detailed review of all historical assessment data and current level of performance was completed for each student in order to create a student profile. Based on this data, it was determined that these students would have a very difficult time succeeding on the OSSLT without some support.

Analysis of the students' profiles showed weaknesses in reading comprehension and written language. The team decided to focus on reading comprehension, and it was determined that implementing text-to-speech software would permit students to access information and enhance their comprehension. A team was set up to train and support the students. The team consisted of three teachers from the Special Education department, two teachers from the Canadian and World Studies department, a technology resource teacher, and the area special services coordinator. The team determined that the Premier Literacy Suite software

« Premier Assistive Technology and the OSSLT, continued

would best serve the students because it was available to all students both at school and at home. The 16 students were withdrawn as a group for 13 sessions during the two months leading up to the OSSLT, and since the Canadian and World Studies department supported the project, students were able to use Premier during these classes. The literacy preparation classes were staggered during different periods of the day to prevent the students from missing the same class each day.

Overall, the project was a huge success. Of the 16 students who participated in the program, six passed the test and an additional five students scored between 275 and 295 out of 300. It was interesting to note that all 16 students who participated in the program said that they would continue to use Premier when completing assignments. The project permitted teachers from various subject areas to become proficient with Premier and to become mentors and leaders in their school.

The project's success was an encouraging and affirming experience for all parties involved. As a result of this experience, Premier LS is now being used in the resource room and has become part of the school's GLE offerings to further support students. Many regular classroom teachers are encouraging students to use the program in the classroom and at home. The project also created a buzz around assistive technology, with the result that teachers are inquiring about other programs which can support their students' success. ●

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Le nouveau document *L'apprentissage de la maternelle à la 12^e année* : une réponse à tout ou une ressource liant EED et pédagogie ?

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C'est le 2 octobre dernier que le MÉO lançait ce tout nouveau recueil. Et le 21 octobre, les surintendances et les directions de services en EED étaient en rencontre pédagogique pour recevoir une présentation détaillée de *L'apprentissage de la maternelle à la 12^e année*. Et déjà applaudissements, mises en gardes, réactions, besoins d'ajouts. Tant mieux car ce document est à l'état ébauche pour le plus grand bien de tous les éducateurs et éducatrices de la province.

Nous attirons votre attention à la table des matières : Introduction, Les approches pédagogiques, l'évaluation au service de l'apprentissage, La planification de l'évaluation et de l'enseignement, les annexes et la bibliographie... un document de près de 60 pages faciles à lire et à comprendre. Le document fournit exemples de gabarit pour vos profils de classe, vos profils d'élèves, une liste de contrôle pour orienter les pratiques d'enseignement au moyen des principes de la conception universelle de l'apprentissage.



Le document s'insère dans trois principes dignes de notre respect : la personnalisation, la précision et l'apprentissage professionnel et il cite le système Breakthrough. Et le ciment unissant ces trois composantes essentielles en devient le but moral, à savoir une éducation pour tous qui monte la barre tout en réduisant les écarts. Évidemment, le document est en grand respect de la plateforme électorale du gouvernement provincial au pouvoir aujourd'hui.

Le Ministère de l'éducation souhaite que partout en province, des éducateurs et des éducatrices se rencontreront pour lire, commenter, discuter *L'apprentissage de la maternelle à la 12^e année* et retourner leurs rétroactions au conseil scolaire lead de leur région. Les conseils lead pour les francophones sont le CSDCSO pour la région centre-sud-ouest, le CSDCEO pour l'est de la province et le CSC Franco-Nord pour les six conseils du nord. Soyez aux aguets pour une invitation de rencontre sous peu.

Bonne lecture et bonnes discussions ! ●

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Learning for All K–12

Learning for All K–12 (L4All K–12) was released on June 25, 2009 as an unformatted draft resource guide to all school boards.

L4All K–12 builds on the guiding principles outlined in Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6 and supports a reach every student educational culture founded on the individual and collective ownership of the learning and achievement of all students. The valuable input we received during last year's regional consultations has helped shape the development of the draft document. *L4All K–12* supports the work being done to raise the bar and close the achievement gap for all students through the *Literacy and Numeracy K–6*, the *Student Success/Learning to 18 Initiatives*, and *Growing Success: Assessment, evaluation and reporting: Improving student learning*.

L4All K–12 is designed to share information with educators about educational approaches that have proven to be effective in helping all students learn Kindergarten to Grade 12

—from high achievers to those who require more time and support. The approaches in *L4All K–12* include:

- assessment for learning;
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL);
- Differentiated Instruction (DI); and
- the tiered approach.

L4All K–12 presents knowing your students as an important first step in an integrating the process of assessment and instruction to improve student learning at both the elementary and secondary levels. The draft document also provides educators with planning tools (student and class profiles) that support student progress along the individual learning and growth continuum from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

To support the release of the draft of *Learning for All K–12*, the Ministry of Education provided funding in 2009–2010 to all school boards to support the use of *Learning for All K–12* and its associated planning tools. In addition, selected *L4All K–12* lead school boards received additional funding to work with their internal and regional partners in order to gather information that will inform the finalization of the draft document, and to lead the sharing of effective practices that promote these approaches and tools in the elementary and secondary panels.

Each *L4All K–12* lead school board will host a one-day orientation session in their region in October 2009. The purpose of these regional sessions is to encourage the sharing of best practices and to stimulate feedback about *Learning for All K–12* that will inform the finalization of the document.

Each *L4All K–12* lead school board will also coordinate the sharing of information with school boards in their region throughout the 2009–2010 school year, and will participate on a provincial *L4All K–12* Networking Team with the other *L4All K–12* lead school boards. This Networking Team will meet regularly with the Ministry of Education to discuss the use of *Learning for All K–12* within their own school boards and regions, and will advise the Ministry on effective practices and on the finalization of the resource guide.

The draft of *Learning for All K–12* is posted on the Council of Ontario Directors' of Education (CODE) website.

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About Essential for Some, Good for All

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significant contribution to the goals and outcomes of the project. Three site visits have taken place since the beginning of the school year.

Project Framework: Seven Common Goals

1. To determine the unifying purposes of CODE and how these have been defined and realized within and across projects
2. To delineate the explicit and implicit design features of CODE, the elements that comprise it, and their interrelationship
3. To understand how CODE projects began and how they have changed over time within and across districts
4. To identify and articulate the mutual impact and effects of CODE projects on each other
5. To chart the mutual impact and effects of CODE initiatives on other policies and practices, both within the participating districts and in relation to provincial educational emphases
6. To elicit the forms and actions of leadership teams that have been significant in the development and impact of CODE projects
7. To uncover the plans and prospects for the sustainability of CODE and the purposes that CODE is designed to achieve

Project Phases

The project has three phases: preparation, site visits, and analysis. Site visits will occur over two to three days and will comprise observations, interviews, and data collection. The aim of site visits is to observe practices and interactions in the schools. Formal and informal interviews will be conducted with key people: board personnel, principals, teachers, and union representatives. The goal of observations and interviews is to document the design, impact, and achievements of each CODE project. Similarities and differences that may be transferable across the different educational contexts will also be explored. Archival materials to be collected and analyzed will include interview transcriptions, data analysis, assessments, and information contained in official publications, brochures, and websites.

Project Timeline

Phase I	October 2008–August 2009	Preparation
Phase II	September 2009–May 2010	Site visits
Phase III	June 2010–July 2010	Analysis and final report

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