



Executive Summary

October 2006

PROJECTS

ALGOMA DSB

Classroom Focus on Literacy

ALGONQUIN & LAKESHORE CDSB

Improving LIVES

AVON MAITLAND DSB

Building Capacity to Improve Student Learning

BLUEWATER DSB

Using Technology to Support DI and UD

BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK CDSB

Differentiated Teaching

BRUCE-GREY CDSB

Sounds Like Learning

CDSB OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Enabling Growth and Higher Achievement

CECLF DU CENTRE-EST

Enseignement explicite des mathématiques

CEP DE L'EST DE L'ONTARIO (CEPEO)

L'application d'une pédagogie de la sollicitude

CSC DU NOUVEL-ONTARIO

Réussir par la gestion des apprentissages

CSD CENTRE SUD-OUEST

Matériel adapté au cycle moyen

CSD DU GRAND NORD DE L'ONTARIO

Le dépistage précoce avec l'outil de l'AOTA

CSD DU NORD-EST DE L'ONTARIO

La classe différenciée

CSDC CENTRE-SUD

Développement de la conscience phonologique

CSDC DE L'EST ONTARIEN

L'enseignement explicite et la pédagogie différenciée

CSDC DES AURORES BORÉALES

La classe différenciée

CSDC DES GRANDES RIVIERES

Le succès de l'élève, c'est l'affaire de tous

CSDC FRANCO-NORD

Vivre l'inclusion au cycle moyen

CSDEC DU SUD-OUEST

Différentiation et auto-régulation

DSB OF NIAGARA

Planning for Success

DSB ONTARIO NORTH EAST

Building Capacity for All

DUFFERIN PEEL CDSB

Connecting Our Catholic Community

DURHAM CDSB

Inclusion Into Practice

DURHAM DSB

Early Literacy Intervention

GRAND ERIE DSB

Increasing Capacity to teach students with Special Needs

GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DSB

Mill Street and Parkview School Capacity Building Project

HALTON CDSB

Capacity Building LD Remediation Centre

HALTON DSB

Success For All: Halton's Journey

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CDSB

Building Capacity Through Planning and Technology

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DSB

Differentiated Instruction In The Classroom

HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD DSB

Improving Literacy Achievement

HURON-PERTH CDSB

Success for Students through Capacity Building and PLCs

HURON-SUPERIOR CDSB

Education For All Initiative

KAWARTHA PINE RIDGE DSB

Increasing Student Success through DI and UD

KEEWATIN-PATRICIA DSB

Closing the Gap for All

KENORA CDSB

Enhancing Learning for All

LAKEHEAD DSB

Making the Grade in Reading

LAMBTON KENT DSB

Assessment and Differentiated Instruction

LIMESTONE DSB

Linking Behavior Learning Centres and Regular Classes Through Literacy

LONDON DCSB

Building Inclusive Schools

NEAR NORTH DSB

Technology to Assist Learning

NIAGARA CDSB

Making the Difference for Students with Special Needs

NIPISSING-PARRY SOUND CDSB

Effective Communication for All

NORTHEASTERN CDSB

Literacy and Numeracy Success for All

NORTHWEST CDSB

Changing Teacher Practice

OTTAWA-CARLETON CDSB

The Impact of Oral Language on Student Achievement

OTTAWA-CARLETON DSB

Effective Literacy Instruction - Students with Special Needs

PEEL DSB

Implementation of the Schools Attuned Program

PETERBOROUGH VICTORIA

NORTHUMBERLAND &

CLARINGTON CDSB

REACH

RAINBOW DSB

Building Essential Learning Through Literacy Coaches

RAINY RIVER DSB

Student Achievement For Everyone (S.A.F.E.)

RENFREW COUNTY CDSB

Assistive Technology /Diagnostic Math Tool

RENFREW COUNTY DSB

Building a Shared Understanding

SIMCOE COUNTY DSB

Improving Achievement Through Early Intervention

SIMCOE MUSKOKA CDSB

Capacity Building for Classroom and Special Education Teachers

ST. CLAIR CDSB

Early Literacy Intervention

SUDBURY CDSB

Improving the Literacy Skills of Students with Special Needs

SUPERIOR NORTH CDSB

Improving Achievement with Assistive Technology

SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DSB

Reaching All, Teaching All

THAMES VALLEY DSB

School wide Applications Model - Education For All

THUNDER BAY CDSB

Differentiating for Success

TORONTO CDSB

Enhancing Instruction and Learning For All Students

TORONTO DSB

Success For All: Stretching Instruction

TRILLIUM LAKELANDS DSB

Closing the Gap

UPPER CANADA DSB

A New Model of Support Through Coaching

UPPER GRAND DSB

7 UP

WATERLOO CDSB

Focus on Program

WATERLOO REGION DSB

Leveling the Playing Field for LD Students

WELLINGTON DSB

Literacy Success For All

WINDSOR-ESSEX CDSB

A Collaborative Model for Building Instructional Capacity

YORK CDSB

Inclusion planning using AT

YORK REGION DSB

Enhancing Student Achievement

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CODE

Coordinating the Ontario initiative in implementing Education For All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6 (2005) and working to build the capacity of teachers in developing instructional strategies to assist students has been an invigorating project for the Council of Ontario Directors of Education. It is exciting to generate the involvement of so many fine educators with a commitment to improved student learning.

This project has provided a unique opportunity for CODE to work in partnership with the Ministry of Education in helping the government achieve its goals. In addition, the three supervisory officers' organizations, AGÉFO (Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne), OCSOA (Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association) and OPSOA (Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association) worked together to implement the project with support from the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and the Special Education Policy and Program Branch.

The CODE Special Education Project was directed by many teams, which provided advice to ensure that improvement in achievement for students with special education needs remained the primary focus.

The Management Team and the Advisory Committee established goals and set high standards to guide the project.

Through the work of the Coordinator and the Expert Leadership Team a consistent approach with a coaching component was used to develop and monitor board projects across the province.

The Monitoring Teams provided pressure and support to boards and a vehicle to coordinate findings. The research component of the project gathered and analyzed data, which will provide advice on the next steps that boards can take to ensure continued success.

This report is a comprehensive look at a very large initiative in assisting improvement in student achievement. CODE appreciates the efforts of all who have been involved in this initiative and applauds the Ontario Ministry of Education for funding this very worthwhile project. The outcomes are positive; the work is on-going.

Frank Kelly,
Executive Director
Council of Ontario Directors of Education

October 2006

ONTARIO CONTEXT

The Ontario government has made improvement in publicly-funded education the centerpiece of its mandate. In May 2005, the Ministry of Education allocated \$25 million to the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) to develop a plan to support the recommendations 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. (2005)*. This mandate from the Ministry of Education was an important recognition of the role of CODE in the province.

The CODE Special Education Project 2005-2006 was a strategic action to assist school boards across Ontario to develop lateral capacity building projects to improve teacher professional practice and achievement for students with special education needs.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND DESIGN

The Executive Director of CODE appointed a Management Team and a coordinator for the project. An Advisory Committee of representatives of provincial organizations and special education interest groups provided advice to the CODE Expert Leadership Team as the team developed the parameters for the project.

CODE developed a model that distributed project funding to all school systems based on a consistent and equitable application, selection, distribution, reporting and monitoring process.

CODE created a mixed-model research design to collect data from multiple sources. All boards completed interim and final reports. Monitoring teams visited all of the CODE projects during the designated monitoring weeks at the beginning and end of the project year to conduct structured interviews. CODE conducted a separate "Voices from the Field" monitoring project and collected additional data from superintendents responsible for special education.

Seventy-five supervisory officers responsible for special education, approximately 21,000 school board employees, and almost two million students were involved in the projects.

PROJECT OUTCOMES FOR TEACHERS

1. Evidence of Change in Knowledge and Practice

All school board projects incorporated evidence-based instructional strategies found in *Education for All. The Final Research Report: The Impact of the CODE Special Education Project in Ontario Schools 2005-2006* notes that 93% of school board final project reports provided data that indicated positive impact for teachers. (p. 3) The research report states:

...When school boards implemented the cluster of evidence based strategies contained in the CODE special education application project template and precisely focussed on providing professional learning based on instructional content from *Education for All (2005)* evidence of beginning outcomes of short term improvement in staff knowledge and practice and student achievement began to emerge...

Overall findings from CODE projects provided early indications of a shift in school board practice to increased inclusion and effective instruction of students with special needs in the regular classroom, with evidence of increased teacher expectations, respect and belief that all children can succeed.

Rees-Potter, C., & Kasian, M. (2006), p. 10

The research report provides a detailed review of the project impact on classroom teachers and special education teachers (pp. 32-49). Some examples of outcomes for teachers include an increase in teacher content knowledge; an increased use of classroom strategies; an increased use of resources in the classroom; and increased communication using a "common language" for classroom teachers with other classroom teachers, with special education resource teachers, educational assistants, principals and system staff, including coaches. (p. 34)

2. Focus of Change in Teaching Practice

The research report provides the following table, setting out the main focus of school board CODE projects by type of evidence-based instructional strategy from Education for All.

% of Boards Reported n=72	Evidence Based Strategy from Education for All
85 %	Differentiated Instruction
73.3 %	Literacy
70 %	Assistive Technology
61.6 %	Professional Learning Communities
52 %	Universal Design
40 %	Assessment for Learning
35 %	Numeracy

Rees-Potter, C. & Kasian, M. (2006), p. 13a

3. Interview Responses about the Project Impact on Teachers

- "I've learned from *Education for All*. I've thought, 'This is how I could deal with this situation, because of that knowledge.' The way I teach lessons has changed - that is, understanding students have different skills...I want to make sure all kids are successful and *Education for All* has helped." (classroom teacher)
- "My practices have changed as a result of all the integrated projects. I look more closely at what I do and how I deliver the program. I'm not just looking at the curriculum. I'm now really teaching the children. I look more at how I'm teaching." (classroom teacher)
- "Before I used to withdraw kids. Now I work in classes all the time." (special education teacher)
- "I see a change in data collection - the DRA and PM benchmarks. The collection of data is consistent and ongoing. I see lessons built on the data. I see lessons based on needs of students in that grade at that particular time." (principal)

4. Examples of the Impact of the CODE Project on Teachers

Here are two examples of the project impact on teachers taken from final board reports.

- Teachers were divided into an active and a control group. The active group participated in workshops, a professional learning community, and visits to a mentor's classroom to observe practice. Teachers in the control group attended only regular board in-service sessions. Pre- and post measures of the knowledge and practices of teachers in the active group revealed a high degree of knowledge about effective language strategies and language development. (Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board)
- The percentage of teachers able to teach students strategies using assistive technology increased from 46% to 97%. Following the CODE project, 85% of teachers were using assistive technology to provide assessment accommodations for students. (Trillium Lakelands District School Board)

PROJECT OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

1. *The Final Research Report: The Impact of the CODE Special Education Project in Ontario Schools 2005-2006* states that 96% of school board final project reports provided data that indicated positive impact for students. (p. 3) The research report provides examples.

Assessment Strategies/Tools	Outcomes-Knowledge, Achievement, Use of Resources, Learning Strategies, Social, Emotional Well Being, Behaviour
Crévola Oral Language Screening Tool K-Gr. I	Improved student reading achievement levels over time, as measured by pre-post assessments using DRA, PM Benchmarks, Running Records or CASI
Literacy Assessment Tools eg. PM Benchmarks, DRA, CASI, Running Records	Improved student oral language achievement levels over time, as measured by pre-post assessments.
Numeracy Assessment Tools eg. PRIME Math Diagnostics	Improved student writing achievement over time, evidenced in writing levels of development, measured by pre-post assessments
Observation	Improved student achievement in spelling, as measured by pre-post assessments
Interviews	Improved student math achievement levels, as measured in pre-post assessments
Surveys, Questionnaires	Improved student engagement and in class participation
Writing Assessment Tools	Improved student completion of assignments and homework

Rees-Potter, C., & Kasian, M. (2006), p. 28

2. Interview Responses about the Project Impact on Students

- "I see more confidence in the children, calmness, a comfort level. This is reflected from the teacher. There is an overall sense of positive learning." (principal)
- "We are looking at students differently. We are starting to say, 'What can we do right now?' There is a big change in thinking that teaching can make such a difference. It isn't just accepting that students are having trouble." (classroom teacher)
- "Our expectations are higher, so students achieve more as students are integrated into regular programs." (educational assistant)

3. Examples of Projects with Positive Student Impact

The following table sets out examples of board initiatives that demonstrated a positive impact for students. The Final Research Report and a summary of the highlights of all board projects can be viewed at www.ontariodirectors.ca.

Impact of CODE Project on Students in 2005-2006	Lessons Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers implemented a 100% increase in the use of five writing strategies and an 89% increase in regular feedback and assessment. • As a result, 20% of students increased one entire level or more in writing. • The number of level 3 and 4 students improved from 34% to 68%. • Only 2% of students with IEPs were at levels 3 or 4 before the CODE project, as compared with 29% at those levels following the project. (Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario) 	<p>A coaching model with lead teachers and consultants and clear data to show progress ensured effective implementation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% des enseignants mettent en application des adaptations pédagogiques et évaluatives différenciées pour mieux répondre aux besoins de tous les élèves. • 25% des élèves des écoles ciblées ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage démontrent une amélioration en littératie et en numératie d'au moins un niveau de rendement. (Le Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario) 	<p>Ce projet a été facilitée par la mise en place d'équipes multidisciplinaires.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96% of grade one students who participated in the Tier 2 intervention program improved their reading levels on the *DRA, and 45% of these students improved by at least one level on the report card. • The kindergarten Gates-MacGinitie results revealed that 38% of students in the project schools achieved at the level of stanines 9, 8 and 7. The national average is 23%. • Grade one results showed that 37% of students in the project schools were in the upper three stanines. (District School Board Ontario North East) 	<p>Project goals were supported by literacy coaches, special education resource teachers working within classrooms, and by active professional learning communities.</p>

continued...

Impact of CODE Project on Students in 2005-2006	Lessons Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of using targeted strategies indicated a range of 8% to 40% improvement in student achievement in the seven project schools. One school reported 10%-40% improvement in students' ability to comprehend using the "retell, reflect, relate" strategy. Another school reported 31% improvement with the use of graphic organizers. A secondary school reported a class average going from 68% to 83% after using graphic organizers. <p>(Durham Catholic District School Board)</p>	<p>The board learned the value of a coach and of the action research model.</p> <p>The project revealed the need to improve the system for data collection and for joint work in collaborative teams.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In one school, only 38% of students in grade three attained the *DRA benchmark level in December, 2005, with 80% of students attaining that level in May, 2006. In one school, 41% of grade one students were identified as being at some risk in reading in December, compared with only 11% being at risk in May. 37% of grade two students were identified as being at high risk in December. This number was reduced to 17% in May. In one school, 6% of grade four students attained levels 3 and 4 in the *CASI in February, 2006, compared with 48% at that level in May. <p>(Greater Essex County District School Board)</p>	<p>Data analysis was important in increasing teacher motivation to meet the demands of what the data revealed. Professional learning communities also contributed greatly to project success.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final results for over 500 primary students, using PM Benchmark, the *PPVT, the *CTOPP and regular classroom measures, show that students in the CODE project treatment group demonstrated increased achievement in literacy skill development. Students in the regular class whose teachers were actively involved in the project showed remarkable gains on the *PPVT. Their average percentile rank was higher than those in the control group. These students also improved their report card results. <p>(Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board)</p>	<p>Project success was largely due to the time teachers had to work collaboratively, under the guidance of experts, with resources to support them and time to assimilate and apply what they had learned.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiered instruction and scaffolding was provided for students with special needs so that they could participate and achieve high standards and be included in EQAO testing. All students with special needs involved in the project have shown progress on the tracking boards over a five month period. Changes in *DRA levels exceeding 10 points most often occurred in grades one and two. <p>(Rainbow District School Board)</p>	<p>A major factor in success was having a resource teacher provide coaching and mentoring in classes twice a week for several months.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools have established professional learning communities in the primary and junior divisions and all primary divisions have established a division-wide literacy continuum to support shared responsibility for individual student achievement. The data from the literacy continuums show growth in student achievement from October, 2005 to May, 2006. 73% of kindergarten students achieved the May benchmark in the *DRA in February. <p>(Rainy River District School Board)</p>	<p>The professional learning communities have improved teaching practice. Principals were given "look-fors" to enhance their instructional leadership.</p>

continued...

Impact of CODE Project on Students in 2005-2006	Lessons Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The achievement of students with special learning needs was tested before and after the project with the *CASI instrument. Before the project, results were: 33% of students below level 1; 48% at level 1; 19% at level 2; and 0% at level 3. Following the project, the results were: 17% of students below level 1; 38% at level 1; 33% at level 2 and 12% at level 3. In 2004-2005 11% of grade six students were exempt from the EQAO testing. Following the project, 5% of grade six students were exempted. 90% of teachers reported that their students were accessing assistive technology more frequently following the project. (Trillium Lakelands District School Board) 	<p>Follow-up professional learning, support at the school level, on-site learning opportunities and the creation of a professional learning community were crucial in creating significant change in teaching practice.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the eight pilot elementary schools, many grade six students are now producing work equivalent to level 1 and 2 in EQAO testing, when before the project they were exempted or achieving below level one. 63% of secondary students in the four pilot schools accessing assistive technology to write the test were successful on the 2006 *OSSLT, compared to 41% of students in the remaining six schools in the board whose students also accessed technology. The success rate for all students with special education needs in the province is 55%. The deferral rate for students with special education needs in the CODE project was zero. (York Catholic District School Board) 	<p>The focus on data enhanced project success. On-site training support and technical assistance was another highlight of the project.</p>

*References to assessment instruments in the table: DRA - Developmental Reading Assessment; CASI - Comprehension, Attitudes, Strategies and Interests Inventory; PPVT - Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; CTOPP - the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing; OSSLT - Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

PROJECT OUTCOMES FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

1. *The Final Research Report: The Impact of the CODE Special Education Project in Ontario Schools 2005-2006* provides a review of the project impact on principals and vice-principals. (pp. 51-53) One important example of project impact is an increased emphasis on instructional leadership. (p. 51)

Increased Role as Instructional Leader as a Result of Increased PD

- a) higher expectation for knowledge and involvement in school activities...application of new knowledge...coordinated school Professional Learning Teams
- b) new "change" agent eg. responsible for taking Education for All and developing school needs from it and creating a focus on student achievement
- c) acquired new language from Education for All, used to work with staff
- d) focus on assessment for learning and use of student data results for improved instruction

2. Interview Responses about the Project Impact on Principals

- "Our coaching projects focus on the principal as instructional leader...When principals walk through classrooms they know what to look for." (system staff)

- "Principals are now owning the professional development of their school." (system staff)
- "The principals meet monthly...This is our professional learning community...We always discuss Education for All and how it is going...I can support my school professional learning community because of the system support I have had." (principal)

PROJECT OUTCOMES FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

Some boards reported a new, enhanced role for educational assistants. In these boards, educational assistants participated in the same professional learning opportunities as the teachers. They were also reported as taking a more active role in collaborating with teachers about providing program support to students. These board reports noted a new respect for the role and contributions of educational assistants in the schools. (Rees-Potter, C., & Kasian, M. p. 50)

PROJECT OUTCOMES FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

1. Evidence of Enhanced Skills in System Leadership

a) Collaboration

Boards frequently mentioned increased collaboration and improved professional relationships between program and special education superintendents and departments as a positive outcome of the CODE project. This collaboration often began with the development of the CODE project proposal and led to new connections among initiatives and new structures for ongoing joint work. For one example, Avon Maitland District School Board developed a School Success Council that sustains the connections between program and special education system leaders and coordinates all system planning.

b) Alignment, Coherence and Focus

There were many examples of superintendents aligning initiatives and making organizational changes to sustain school-based systemic improvement. These leaders developed coherent structures to support continued problem-solving. For example, Upper Canada District School Board responded to a comprehensive system review of special education programs and services by providing embedded professional learning for classroom teachers. The board changed the system structure and supports to reflect this new focus. One of the changes was to assign a learning resource coach with special education qualifications to each school.

c) Effective Use of Data

Superintendents reported a new focus on the use of data to clarify problems and guide decision-making. The table on pages 5-7 highlights the effective use of data as a major factor in creating urgency for change and tracking progress in the ten CODE projects listed.

d) Instructional Leadership

Superintendents with responsibility for special education often reported that their role had changed to include a greater emphasis on instructional leadership as a result of involvement in the CODE project. The final research report noted:

Many superintendents reflected that they believed that change had occurred in their leadership role as a result of their involvement with the CODE Special Education Project. Involvement as a project leader prompted, they believed, a change of "focus" for them, with a shift to a greater emphasis on an instructional leadership role where they were required to be informed, to know more of what is happening at a school level in relation to teacher practice and student outcomes for students with special needs.

Rees-Potter, C., & Kasian, M. (2006), p. 67.

e) Leading a Major Change Initiative

Members of the CODE monitoring teams were impressed by the degree of enthusiasm for the projects demonstrated by school and system staff members across the province. These positive attitudes were indications of the ability of system leaders to gain commitment for change efforts and to foster a culture that supports experimentation.

2. Interview Responses about the Project Impact on System Leaders

- "We are figuring out how the Expert Panel committee of coordinators, consultants, principals and system team can continue to plan together. We can't lose this connection - the awareness of links between program and special education. We have been too 'siloed'." (superintendent)
- "We message the alignment of all initiatives. It's not 'one more thing'." (system staff)
- "The Special Education Resource Teachers all said, 'It is great to see curriculum and special education working together at the system level, because it really impacts on us back at the school level.' It is modeling for them and for teachers in the school." (system staff)

1. LESSONS LEARNED: SCHOOL LEVEL

(a) Job-embedded Learning and Coaching

Boards frequently described the importance of using a coaching model that provides ongoing support to teachers within the specific contexts in which they work. Most of the boards whose projects are described in the table on pages 5-7 make some reference to the importance of on-site coaching as a key "lesson learned" from the CODE Special Education Project 2005-2006.

(b) Effective Use of Data

Boards stressed the need for an action research approach in which teachers asked questions about their practice, collected specific data, disaggregated the data and used this information to provide more precise and focused teaching. Boards discovered the importance of focusing on a few key pieces of data that created urgency for change and motivated teachers to learn new strategies to address the identified needs.

(c) Collaborative Teams/Professional Learning Communities

The CODE projects stressed the need for joint work in collaborative teams, noting that change only happens in a collegial culture. Many professional learning communities described in CODE projects were in the early stage of development. However, board reports highlighted the effectiveness of these communities when educators shared responsibility for the learning of all students, analyzed data together and carried out coordinated responses.

(d) Shared Responsibility

Board projects demonstrated a sense of shared responsibility among administrators, lead teachers working as classroom coaches and mentors, and classroom and special education teachers. There were frequent references to new professional relationships between classroom and special education teachers to support student learning in the classroom.

(e) The Principal as Instructional Leader

Boards noted that the principal's leadership is essential in creating structures, processes and organizational supports that enhance student learning. Boards stressed that the effective principal knows what to look for during walkthroughs and teacher performance appraisal, and is actively involved in professional learning communities in the school.

2. LESSONS LEARNED: BOARD LEVEL

District school boards identified the following factors as being critical for success in system change.

- (a) Designing a project with clear, measurable objectives to address identified needs and support system values;
- (b) Providing support and pressure for a greater focus on instructional leadership for school administrators;
- (c) Developing effective data collection systems at the district and school level and providing training in the use of data to guide instruction;
- (d) Communicating clearly and in a timely way to all key stakeholders to provide a consistent project message;
- (e) Providing resources, regular professional learning opportunities with effective follow-up, and ongoing in-school coaching for project participants;
- (f) Breaking down the "silos" between program and special education departments, and modelling new working relationships;
- (g) Fostering a collegial culture with collaborative teams and professional learning communities;
- (h) Supporting and monitoring coordinated action; and
- (i) Identifying and sharing best practices and successes.

3. LESSONS LEARNED: PROVINCIAL LEVEL

The CODE Special Education Project created a significant impact across the province. Members of the CODE leadership team and superintendents responsible for special education identified the key factors essential to replicating the success of this project.

(a) Effective Team Leadership

The CODE leadership team was made up of members who contributed a wealth of knowledge of current research, the organizational factors that affect student learning, and special education issues at all levels. Three members from the affiliate supervisory officers' associations successfully worked together with the Executive Director of CODE, the Project Coordinator, and representatives from the Special Education Program and Policy Branch of the Ministry of Education, and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.

(b) Precision in Project Design

CODE spent a great deal of time developing the Special Education Project proposal document, to stress the articulation between each board's proposal and the board improvement plan. The nature of the questions in the proposal document worked effectively to de-construct the process and to focus on results for student and teacher learning.

(c) Momentum and Urgency

The success of the CODE project was due, in large part, to having every board in the province funded equally to implement a change effort. This involvement supported lateral capacity building and created networks of superintendents. It also provides a unique opportunity to codify province-wide knowledge about teaching and leadership practices gained during the CODE project.

(d) Effective Monitoring

The monitoring teams raised the profile of the CODE Special Education Project, supported boards, and provided accountability for project goals. Individuals who were interviewed were very much aware that they were part of a provincial research project, and this knowledge was quickly communicated to others. One member of the CODE team stated:

If you can't monitor early on, especially for a paradigm shift, don't even start. In the past we haven't monitored the application of staff development.

(e) Critical Modelling of an Inquiry Process

The CODE monitoring process helped educators across Ontario to understand the kind of information that is important evidence of success in any school or board context. The interview questions provided a useful inquiry model. A CODE team member said:

We need to have principals collecting data in their schools - data on what the principal sees, and being very focused on school improvement planning. All the probing in the CODE project should now be reflected in school planning...Superintendents say they are asking specific questions now and principals know there will be this conversation. This has changed practice...

(f) Building Capacity and Sustainability

CODE assisted in the development of a professional learning community of superintendents with responsibility for special education. CODE held province-wide sessions to share project learning, to gather data and to assist with the development of the required project reports.

Superintendents described the learning acquired during these networking meetings as "highly valued as a useful opportunity to further professional knowledge at the superintendent level". There were many requests "to continue this networking type of support model".

FUTURE DIRECTIONS: 2006-2007

1. GREATER PRECISION IN DATA COLLECTION

Superintendents responsible for special education reported the need for ongoing professional learning for staff members, and identified further learning about the effective use of data as a critical need. Superintendents also identified the need to plan for both short and long-term outcomes of their CODE projects and to develop a long-term commitment to measuring sustained success for teachers and for students with special education needs.

In the second year of the CODE Special Education Project, boards need to be very precise about what students can actually do, and need to collect clear data about teacher capacity.

One issue that emerged during the special education project was that teachers need to enhance their ability to disaggregate the data for students with special needs and for the other students in the class. The 2006-2007 projects must be able to demonstrate growth in achievement for students with special needs as well as for other students.

2. ENHANCED CAPACITY BUILDING ACROSS THE PROVINCE

The CODE Special Education Project demonstrated CODE's ability to bring superintendents together to change practice. CODE wants to build upon this foundation of networking, take the exemplary practices from the CODE projects and use them to increase interaction and capacity for other educators. This initiative has the power to create new province-wide professional learning communities and to sustain the learning from the CODE project for years to come.

Drawing from complexity theory, I have already made the case that if you want to change systems, you need to increase the amount of purposeful interaction between and among individuals within and across the tri-levels, and indeed within and across systems.

Fullan, M. (2005). Leadership and Sustainability. p. 17

The CODE Special Education Project 2005 - 2006

Executive Summary

October 2006



CODE

Council of Ontario Directors of Education

1123 Glenashton Drive
Oakville, Ontario L6H 5M1
Tel: 905.845.4254
Fax: 905.845.2044