

CODE CHRONICLES LES CHRONIQUES DU CODE

ISSUE NO. 3
MARCH 2009



WELCOME TO ISSUE THREE! BIENVENUE À LA TROISIÈME ÉDITION!
Read on and enjoy the contributions of our many writers from school districts across Ontario. Prenez connaissance des contributions de vos collègues de par tous les conseils scolaires de l'Ontario. Bonne Lecture!

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to the following boards for participating in this issue

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
Durham District School Board
North Eastern Ontario School Authorities
Northwest Catholic District School Board
Waterloo Region District School Board
Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord

New Video: PLC 123 – A Professional Development Model to Support the Learning of All Students

OVER THE past three years, the Upper Canada District School Board has implemented a coaching model to build the capacity of classroom teachers to support the learning and achievement of students with special education needs within the regular classroom. We have seen positive results for students with special needs over the past three years in our reading assessment data, teacher self-efficacy, and EQAO data for students with special education needs. In this video, you will see professional learning in action through a job-embedded learning model that we call PLC 123.

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Letter from the Editors

Brian Finnigan, Nancy Tully-Peever

WE ARE pleased to present to you the third online edition of CODE Chronicles. We would like to thank all of the boards who have contributed articles to this edition as well as our guest editor, Marie Parsons, Chief Assessment Officer at the Education Quality and Accountability Office.

As the many challenges of 2009 unfold on both the Canadian and world stage, it becomes more important than ever that you as educational leaders keep a strong sense of hope and focus on student achievement and staff capacity building. We know you will also continue to reflect on what moving forward means to you and your school districts through active dialogue and sharing of lessons learned. We congratulate you once again for your ongoing commitment to the students with special education needs in this province.

We would like to encourage you to post comments to the authors of these articles by using the email links provided at the end of each article.

We would also welcome your feedback and encourage you to continue to share your successes and challenges in your own school districts as well as with colleagues across the province.

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Letter To the Editors:

Marie Parsons
Chief Assessment Officer, EQAO

Assessing Every Student The Power of Good Information

For Ontario's publicly funded school boards, as for any large organization, achieving better results and continuous improvement requires the collection and use of reliable data. In Ontario's school system, EQAO's census assessments, written annually by approximately 600,000 students in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 10, have proven to be a key contributor to the progress witnessed in student achievement across the province.

The information provided to students, parents, and school and board staff is a crucial piece of the mosaic that reflects the learning profile of the student. Classroom teachers gather data from a wide variety of sources using a plethora of techniques and tools. They examine the three facets of assessment—assessment

Continued on Page 2

CONTENTS

CODE FUNDS SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN ALCDSB (ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DSB).....2

USING THE WEB-BASED TEACHING TOOL AND AN OBSERVATION SURVEY OF EARLY LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT TO DELIVER A TIERED APPROACH TO EARLY INTERVENTION (DURHAM DSB)2

NEOSA'S ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (NORTH EASTERN ONTARIO SCHOOL AUTHORITIES) 6

FOUR QUESTIONS TO FOCUS, CHANGE, AND TRANSITION TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (NORTHWEST CATHOLIC DSB)..... 7

VIVRE L'INCLUSION AU CYCLE MOYEN (CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE FRANCO-NORD).....7

CORRECTIVE READING AND EMPOWER™ (WATERLOO REGION DSB)8

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« Letter to the Editors, continued

of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning. Provincial assessments that gather information from every student provide an essential foundation of data that educators, policymakers, and researchers rely on to plan for student progress. The evidence of success is clearly painted by the multitude of school, board, and government initiatives that have been developed (thanks in part to the analysis of EQAO results) and that have led to better outcomes for tens of thousands of students across the province. Because of Education for All, the many CODE projects that school boards undertook over the past three years have had a significant impact on improving the results for students with special education needs. Over the last three years, results in reading, writing, and mathematics for students with special education needs have improved, with the greatest improvement being 21% in writing.

Every year, EQAO surveys school principals and teachers at the time of the assessments, and their responses confirm the value and importance they place on the student achievement data generated by the full-census assessments. More than 3,400 elementary school principals and more than 7,000 teachers responded to the 2008 survey.

- Of elementary school principals, 94% used the previous year's EQAO achievement results and questionnaire data to communicate with teachers about student achievement and to guide school improvement initiatives relating to reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Of elementary school principals, 91% used EQAO's data to identify program strengths and areas for improvement in reading, writing, and mathematics. Seventy-eight percent used the data to pinpoint where resources were needed.
- Of Grade 3 and 6 teachers, 79% and 73% respectively used student and school EQAO achievement results and questionnaire data to identify areas of reading, writing, and mathematics program strength and areas for improvement.

EQAO reports not only provide a snapshot of student achievement at the end of key stages in their education, but also give contextual descriptions of the school community so that the results can be interpreted in the appropriate context.

The power of good information cannot be underestimated, and this good information must be gathered from a variety of sources over time. The key to continual improvement is to determine what we want our students to achieve and then to ensure that they are learning. To quote Gabriel Filippi, the Canadian mountaineer who successfully reached the summit of Mount Everest, our goal should be to help every child reach his or her summit. Educational leaders outside the classroom—whether they are school principals, directors of education, or ministers of education—work to create the conditions that produce large-scale success and allow the best and most effective learning to take place. For more than a decade, that work has been assisted by the detailed and curriculum-based information provided by EQAO's full-census assessments.

Marie Parsons
Chief Assessment Officer, EQAO

CODE Funds Support Professional Learning Communities in ALCDSB

Maryanne Bullock, Superintendent of School Effectiveness
Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board



The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board continues to celebrate the successes made possible through the CODE funding. In 2007–2008, the ALCDSB student services and curriculum departments worked collaboratively to plan how to best use the CODE dollars to promote and leverage the principles outlined in Education for All. We focused on moving teachers and administrators from knowledge awareness about student learning to knowl-

edge mobilization, where best practices about student learning are shared between schools and across learning networks within the board. The decision to support school-based professional learning communities (PLCs) not only recognized the importance of job-embedded professional development but also allowed the teacher participant to concentrate on instructional strategies and student achievement evidence in focused and collaborative ways.

CODE dollars were used to release teachers to work in professional learning communities (PLCs). Administrators, teachers, and special education resource teachers engaged in processes of inquiry focused on their teaching and assessment practices and analyzing student learning, allowing teachers and administrators to focus on student learning as the goal. In "Professional Learning Communities, A Model for Ontario Schools" (October 2007), the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat states: "In order to focus on learning rather than teaching, student attainment of knowledge and skills must be consistently considered and reviewed. A reflective cycle must be initiated—that is, a cycle in which every teacher team participates in an ongoing process of identifying the current level of student achievement, establishing a goal to improve the current level, working together to achieve that goal, and providing periodic evidence of progress" (DuFour, 2004, p. 10). Our CODE project allowed ALCDSB to move one step closer to realizing professional learning communities as an integral part of our teaching and learning culture.

The ALCDSB CODE project allowed for system-level collaboration on a number of initiatives, including those supported by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (OFIP, Turnaround, and School Effectiveness Framework), and a focus on differentiated instruction through student success. The parameters of the PLCs were clearly outlined and included three broad areas of focus: early intervention; differentiated instruction; and assessment as, for, and of learning. Reporting templates were collected as data and included the PLC agenda, instructional strategies discussed, types of data used to inform the PLC dialogue, lessons learned, and artifacts to share with other schools.

Many primary-division PLCs focused on making connections (text to text, text to self, text to world), analyzing students' written responses to text-to-self connections, and developing strategies for improving levels of connections. This first step will be further developed in 2008–2009 as our schools focus on using the model of Teaching-Learning Critical Pathway to focus professional learning communities on student achievement.

Our project highlighted the role of principal as instructional leader and enabled administrators to further develop their skills in facilitating purposeful PLCs with goals connected to school improvement planning and, for some, connected to their school effectiveness framework.

Through CODE, ALCDSB schools were supported in planning effective PLCs. Monitoring continued PLC work through the Teaching-Learning Critical Pathway (TLCP) in 2008–2009 will allow our board to continue developing a comprehensive, differentiated approach, not only in consideration of effective instructional practices to enhance teaching and learning, but as a shift at the system level in how professional learning is planned for and experienced by teachers and administrators in ALCDSB.

Sustainability of best practices in Catholic education can result from a focus on our collective and collaborative efforts to enhance student learning. When teachers and administrators are given opportunities to dialogue in focused ways about student learning, the culture of schools shifts based on the understanding that we, as educators, are responsible for all of the students in our schools. Professional learning communities have been powerful, are linked to high-yield strategies, and have had an impact on the learning culture for both adults and students in ALCDSB.

Our students are our future. Success for all is promoted by a system-level recognition that professional learning communities model lifelong learning, which impacts the role of the teacher in the classroom, the principal as instructional leader, and our students—learning with each other and for each other. ●

✉ Comments about this article? Email bullock@alcdsb.on.ca

Using the Web-Based Teaching Tool and An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement to Deliver a Tiered Approach to Early Intervention

Kim Rankin, Code Project Facilitator and Author
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The Durham District School Board (DDSB) recognizes early intervention as a key element in improving student achievement. The CODE project has been one initiative that has provided specific support in this area. By using the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) and Marie Clay's An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, Senior Kindergarten and Grade One teachers throughout the board have been provided with a consistent means of collecting diagnostic and formative assessment data regarding early literacy achievement. Professional learning opportunities have focused on assisting teachers in translating assessment data into useful information for planning instruction and for delivering a "tiered approach to intervention" (Education for All Expert Panel Report, p. 60).

The project has existed in 38 schools within the district, and these schools have remained constant since 2005. Schools were selected to participate based on their allocation as a "high-achieving" or "low-achieving" school, although the "priority school" status has changed for some of these schools since the beginning of the project, with some high-achieving schools being recently designated as OFIP 2 or OFIP 3. Nineteen high-achieving and nineteen low-achieving schools were selected to participate. A teacher leader with experience both as a Literacy Coach and in the area of special education was designated as project facilitator and helped manage the project. This individual worked closely with both the Special Education Department and the Programs Department, acting as project researcher and liaison.

The following article highlights the lessons learned during the project in relation to the key elements of Professional Learning, Instructional Leadership, Assessment, School and System Organization, and Communication. It includes encouraging data regarding improved student achievement and teacher capacity. Plans for sustaining the project initiatives in order to continue to build on the project's worthwhile outcomes will also be highlighted.

Professional Learning

The Education for All Expert Panel Report emphasizes a number of key belief statements and recommendations related to professional learning. The panel states that:

- "Classroom teachers are the key educators for a student's literacy and numeracy development."

« Using the Web-Based Teaching Tool, continued

- As such, classroom teachers “need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports students with special needs.”
- “Professional development opportunities must provide both ongoing sustained learning and just-in-time information and support.”
- “Professional training should teach educators in the way they learn best: by observing and doing.”

–Education for All Expert Panel Report, 2005

Since the beginning of the project, Durham District School Board has recognized the important role of job-embedded professional learning. In 2005, the role of the Early Literacy Resource Teacher (ELRT) within the board evolved to become that of Literacy Coach, with the focus shifting from remedial withdrawal support for struggling students to shared planning, mentoring, and team-teaching within the regular classroom environment. The goal of the coach is to build teacher capacity in an effort to support all students within the classroom. This shift has reinforced the essential role classroom teachers play in supporting all students. Indeed, the coaching model is also being adopted by many SERTs throughout the board, particularly in schools in which there has been no Literacy Coach assigned. By having modelling and coaching occur within the classroom, a shared vision has emerged within the school for delivering a tiered approach and assessment-driven instruction. Teachers who work in collaboration with Literacy Coaches and/or SERTs are experiencing the benefits of ongoing professional learning within the instructional day.

In keeping with this model of learning through classroom observation, participating teachers in the project expressed an interest in and subsequent benefits associated with visiting demonstration classrooms to observe exemplary practice in action. CODE funding was allocated to provide release time to SK and Grade One teachers to join their Literacy Coaches, SERTs, and at times, administrators, to visit classrooms in Durham’s two Turnaround schools. To further support these visits, the project facilitator also attended and acted as “elbow coach,” drawing attention to various aspects of the host classroom and instructional strategies that illustrated effective ways of implementing a tiered approach to intervention. By visiting these classrooms, participants could see theory put into practice and take the opportunity to dialogue briefly with host teachers about current, research-based strategies they were finding effective. Visiting teachers had the opportunity to ask how teachers had overcome barriers and challenging situations (e.g., lack of resources, classroom management techniques, maximizing instructional time through planning).



To further support capacity building, professional learning communities consisting of project participants in each school were formed and took place at each school site. During these half-day sessions, teachers had the opportunity to learn about the tiered approach to intervention (as outlined on page 60 of Education for All); analyze their student assessment data from the WBTT and Observation Survey; and share effective strategies that would help move

students forward. During these sessions, teachers used class profiles to record plans for small groups and individuals based on current assessment information. This approach of discussing student assessment and sharing strategies for future instruction was borrowed from professional learning community structures also occurring in Durham’s OFIP and Turnaround schools. Response to this approach (which is often referred to as “table talk”) was positive, and most teachers who were surveyed said the opportunity gave them renewed insight into the usefulness of the assessment data they had collected. After taking part in these professional learning communities, many participants recognized the need for regular updates of assessment information in order to monitor growth over time, particularly for students who were struggling.

A large emphasis for the project was on the use of key assessment tools intended to gather information about students’ literacy skills. Teachers needed to be provided with time for training in the procedures for administering these assessments, and this training needed to occur early in the year. These assessments provided diagnostic information necessary for planning differentiated learning opportunities for students. However, the scheduling of training became challenging when also considering the need for SK and Grade One classroom teachers to be present in their classrooms early in the year, when students may be experiencing school for the first time and depend on structure and routine. To help solve this dilemma, training was provided in half-day intervals, and teachers were given choices of dates so that they could select the training time that best suited them. This training included the equivalent of a full day for the WBTT (training provided by a trainer from the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario) and one half-day for An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (training provided by the project facilitator). Throughout the project, as teachers left for maternity leaves or retirement, the project facilitator was responsible for ensuring that their occasional teachers were trained and included in other planned professional learning which was part of the project.

During the training sessions, participants were provided with resources including login information for using the WBTT, their own copy of Marie Clay’s book *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*, and an important binder resource developed by a team of project participants. The binder resource included separate sections which housed the materials required for administering each of the six Observation Survey tasks, separated into pockets for each task, and a collection of printed instructions for interventions from the WBTT that related to each observed skill. The binder resource became an integral tool in linking assessment to instruction and is now being used by all SK and Grade One teachers throughout the board.

The professional learning that has occurred since the beginning of the project is significant and is the result of a strong commitment on the part of Durham’s teachers to make early intervention a priority. Figure 1.0 summarizes some important changes that have

taken place since 2005 in the areas of early intervention and research-based practice in literacy instruction.

Figure 1.0

	Survey Results: November '05	Survey Results: June '07	Survey Results June '08
EARLY INTERVENTION	19 % had knowledge of potential risk factors and early indicators for school failure	96% had knowledge of potential risk factors and early indicators for school failure	98% had knowledge of potential risk factors and early indicators for school failure
COLLABORATION	6% had a working knowledge or experience with professional learning communities	96% agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning communities help foster student achievement	96% agreed or strongly agreed that professional learning communities help foster student achievement
		76% said that PLCs had been formed at their school	89% said that PLCs had been formed at their school
		98% said that meeting with other teachers to discuss programming helps to improve their practice	100% said that meeting with other teachers to discuss programming helps to improve their practice
AWARENESS OF MINISTRY DIRECTIVES	20% were familiar with Education for All, Report of the Expert Panel, 2005	85% are quite knowledgeable or have some working knowledge of Education for All, Report of the Expert Panel, 2005	97% are quite knowledgeable or have some working knowledge of Education for All, Report of the Expert Panel, 2005
WEB BASED TEACHING TOOL	4% had a basic or advanced knowledge of the WBTT	97% had a basic or advanced knowledge of the WBTT	100% had a basic or advanced knowledge of the WBTT

Instructional Leadership

Throughout the project, one key lesson learned was the positive impact of administrator involvement on capacity building, quality instruction, and improved student achievement. It became clear that to be effective, the tiered approach to intervention required the principal’s commitment, leadership, and support.

To facilitate this involvement, administrators were visited early in the year and provided with an overview of the tiered approach, information regarding the WBTT (including ways they could access the online training), and information about Observation Survey. At this time, dates for PLC sessions were established. Regular electronic updates and assessment submission dates were also sent electronically to keep them up to date. Likewise, administrators received regular project updates from their area superintendent. When administrators were aware of the positive impact the project was having, they often provided additional support such as release time for teachers to complete assessments, additional PLC meeting times within the instructional day, and classroom resources.

In order to continue to promote this knowledge mobilization and sustain project goals, school administrators have been invited to participate in WBTT training featuring the new School Administrator Site. Response has been extremely positive, and dates for training have been established for the 2008–09 school year.

Assessment

- Frequent and accurate assessment, evaluation and progress monitoring by the classroom teacher comprise the engine that drives change in instruction to meet the needs of all students....The use of the tiered approach in the early years has been shown to dramatically reduce the number of students in the later grades who would meet criteria for learning disabilities.

– Education for All, Report of the Expert Panel, p. 60

In the first year, the WBTT was used exclusively to provide teachers with a consistent, research-based screening tool that would allow them to assess all students (Tier One) in order to reveal those students who were potentially at-risk, or “flagged,” and who would benefit from more targeted instruction (Tier Two). This initial screening process involved administering the Teacher School Readiness Inventory as well as a phonemic awareness screening tool appropriate for the grade.

Throughout the project, administrators at the LDAO continued improving the WBTT based on teacher feedback. For example, during the first year, teachers reported that it was difficult and time consuming to navigate the intervention menu in order to locate appropriate interventions after completing assessments. However, by the end of the project, the intervention menu had been refined to be more user-friendly.

During the second year of the project, An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2000) was introduced to project participants with the intention of complementing information gathered using the WBTT. Teacher feedback had revealed that although the screeners on WBTT are useful flagging tools, Observation Survey provided them with precise detail about students’ strengths and needs in particular areas including print concepts, writing vocabulary, sight word recognition, and decoding.

« Using the Web-Based Teaching Tool, continued

Student data indicated that there was a significant alignment between the WBTT and Observation Survey, particularly when collecting information about skills in phonemic awareness:

- Of the Grade One students who were flagged on the Yopp-Singer assessment this year, 81% also performed within the third stanine or lower in the Observation Survey's Hearing and Recording Sounds task.
- Of the students who were flagged on the Teacher School Readiness Inventory, 82% also performed within the third stanine or lower in the Observation Survey's Letter Identification task.
- Significant co-relations also existed between the phonemic awareness tasks of the WBTT and the Writing Vocabulary tasks from Observation Survey.

This not only reinforces the reliability of each tool, but also offers teachers two consistent ways of collecting data about phonemic awareness. This means that in the future, teachers may find it more efficient to complete the Rosner (Kindergarten) or Yopp-Singer (Grade One) assessments with all students, and the Hearing And Recording Sounds and or Writing Vocabulary assessments only with those who are flagged. Appendix 1 outlines the student achievement results for the 2007–08 year and demonstrates these correlations in greater detail.

Long-term data demonstrates that the WBTT can assist in providing effective early intervention. To determine the extent to which improvement in student achievement occurred from the beginning of the project in 2005, SERTs in participating schools were asked to submit report card marks in Reading and Writing along with running record levels for students who had been flagged in their Senior Kindergarten year and who were now in Grade Two. Of the students for which information was received:

- 23% of these students had received a formal identification by April 2008.
- 68% of the remaining students were now approaching or meeting the provincial standard in Reading.
- All flagged students who were not formally identified and/or were not approaching or meeting the provincial standard were reported to be receiving some form of Tier Two intervention, either in the classroom by the teacher and/or SERT or during brief interventions sessions outside of the literacy block.

During the third year of the project, DDSB established an assessment collection protocol for Observation Survey data for all Senior Kindergarten and Grade One students throughout the board, including CODE project schools. This protocol includes timelines for teachers to submit Observation Survey assessment data throughout the year. The purpose of establishing such a protocol was to provide consistency across the board, both in the kind of diagnostic and formative literacy assessments which are used, and in the way educators engage in professional dialogue with colleagues regarding student achievement. The board's Assessment and Accountability Department will use the submitted data to track general trends in the results.

CODE participants have been instrumental in providing the board's Programs and Special Education Departments with valuable feedback regarding the importance of time and support during assessment collection. Participants have made suggestions for streamlining the protocol which have resulted in slight revisions to the timelines for collection as well as the introduction of a board-wide electronic assessment data-entry system. To continue to improve knowledge mobilization and encourage sustainability, the board's early literacy assessment protocol will continue to be part of the Durham Board's culture (see Appendix 2).

School and System Organization

Throughout the duration of the project, collaboration between the Special Education Department and Programs Department was strengthened through the participation of senior administrators from both departments in the project steering committee. Other members of this committee included the Education Officer for Assessment and Accountability, the School Effectiveness Framework Officer, and the board's OFIP Officer. The input from various committee members became crucial to the success of the project and reinforced the alignment between the project goals and other Ministry initiatives (Early Reading Strategy, OFIP and Turnaround Schools). Likewise, involvement in the project provided opportunities for committee members from various departments to come together and discuss information regarding work within their own department as it related to early intervention.



Area superintendents and administrative officers also played an active role in monitoring the project's progress and were provided with regular updates from the project facilitator. The facilitator collaborated with the Superintendent of Special Education to develop a project outline and checklist to assist these individuals in monitoring the progress of the project in their own area schools (Appendix 3).

To mobilize knowledge beyond participating schools, workshops on the tiered approach to intervention were provided by the project facilitator during board-wide PD days and two separate board-based "Education for All" conferences. The main focus of these sessions was to provide information about the tiered approach, along with practical instructional strategies that linked directly to assessment results from both the WBTT and Observation Survey. Topics included establishing a five-day plan for Shared Reading; techniques for Interactive Writing; alphabet recognition strategies beyond "letter of the week"; and strategies for introducing guided reading in Kindergarten.

Communication

To foster the success of the project, it became clear that many levels of communication needed to be in place simultaneously. The facilitator acted as liaison by communicating

regularly both with senior administrators in the Special Education and Programs Departments and also with teachers, SERTs, Literacy Coaches, and administrators within the project. With such a large number of participants, regular and concise communication became an important project goal. Email bulletins and updates helped relay project information to a large number of people at one time, but ongoing face-to-face communication was also essential when participants sought support. Feedback was routinely invited through surveys and workshop evaluation forms, and this information helped keep the project facilitator aware of concerns and next steps as the project progressed. In addition, updates regarding project initiatives were provided to SEAC, the project steering committee, Special Education facilitators, K–6 programs facilitators, and the board's Assessment and Accountability Department.

Communication with administrators at the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario was instrumental in facilitating the successful use of the tool, and the LDAO helped managed issues via email or in person as they arose.

Throughout the project, one area that continued to be a focus was improving the home–school connection with regard to early literacy intervention. In order to enhance this connection, project participants:

- were provided with a newsletter for parents that included information about the assessment tools, the importance of early intervention, and strategies for fostering literacy at home;
- discussed strategies for communicating with parents and home–school connections during PLC sessions and after school networking sessions; and
- used their detailed assessment results to inform parents of their child's strengths, needs, and specific next steps.

Looking Ahead – Recommendations for Sustainability

As the project draws to a close, it is important to explore how the positive outcomes from the project will continue to be fostered within the schools and throughout the larger system. Research tells us that the tiered approach or "response to intervention" model, with its emphasis on early intervention, can drastically reduce the number of students that later meet the criteria for learning disabilities. Participation in the CODE project has also promoted the realization that early intervention in Senior Kindergarten and Grade One is ideal, but timely intervention at any age is essential.

The provincial initiative to implement full-day/everyday kindergarten in 2010 will require DDSB to continue to build capacity regarding early intervention and will present new opportunities to build on the successes of the CODE project at the system, school, and classroom levels.

With this in mind, the following initiatives will be put in place to support the concept of early intervention through the tiered approach and implementation will ensure that Durham District School Board takes an active role in achieving "Education for All."

- The Special Education and Programs Departments will continue to provide capacity building opportunities for school and system administrators, Special Education and Programs Facilitators, SERTs, Literacy Coaches, Itinerant teachers, and Central Professional Office Staff (e.g., Speech and Language personnel, Psychological Services) in terms of assessment tools and best practices for early years literacy programming.
- School teams will implement school-based strategies to support teachers as they work to collect assessment data in a timely manner for the purpose of informing instruction.
- The board's Assessment and Accountability Department will include WBTT and Observation Survey data in the new electronic data collection system being introduced by the board in Fall 2008.
- The possible establishment of an Early Intervention Effectiveness Framework could pinpoint specific measurable goals for appropriate practice in Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms and could provide a common language and contact information for administrators, teachers, and support staff.

Appendix 1

CODE Project Summary of Student Achievement Data for 2007-08

Comparison of Overall WBTT Data for 07-08

	% SK Students Flagged On TSRI and/or Rosner Screener	% Grade One Students Flagged on Either TSRI and/or Yopp-Singer Screener
Fall 2007	15 %	10%
Spring 2008	4%	4%

Exploring the Co-relation Between the WBTT and Observation Survey

SK Students Flagged on Rosner and Receiving a Stanine Score of 3 or Below on the Following Observation Survey Tasks:	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
Letter Identification	54%	74%
Concepts About Print	77%	89%
Word Reading	77%	83%
Writing Vocabulary	69%	90%
Hearing and Recording Sounds	57%	79%
Co-relation became stronger at the end of the year, particularly in the area of Writing Vocabulary.		

« Using the Web-Based Teaching Tool, continued

SK Students Flagged on TSRI and Receiving a Stanine Score of 3 or Below on the Following Observation Survey Tasks:	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
Letter Identification	75%	73%
Concepts About Print	95%	100%
Word Reading	84%	82%
Writing Vocabulary	81%	86%
Hearing and Recording Sounds	79%	29%
Strong co-relation between TSRI and Concepts About Print, Word Reading, and Writing Vocabulary.		

Grade One Students Flagged on Yopp-Singer and Receiving a Stanine Score of 3 or Below on the Following Observation Survey Tasks:	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
Letter Identification	59%	70%
Concepts About Print	78%	83%
Word Reading	81%	89%
Writing Vocabulary	89%	95%
Hearing and Recording Sounds	80%	84%
Strongest co-relation is in the area of Writing Vocabulary.		

Grade One Students Flagged on TSRI and Receiving a Stanine Score of 3 or Below on the Following Observation Survey Tasks:	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
Letter Identification	73%	74%
Concepts About Print	78%	76%
Word Reading	81%	74%
Writing Vocabulary	97%	95%
Hearing and Recording Sounds	81%	74%
Strongest co-relation is in the area of Writing Vocabulary.		

Year End Data: WBTT Versus Running Record Information

Senior Kindergarten	Spring 2008
Flagged SK students reading at running record level 0-2	84%
Flagged SK students reading at running record level 3-6	12%
Flagged SK students reading at running record level 7+	3%
(Students who were flagged on WBTT were also reading below the expected reading level for the end of Senior Kindergarten)	

Grade One	Spring 2008
Flagged Grade One students reading at running record Level 0-6	50%
Flagged Grade One students reading at running record Level 7-10	25%
Flagged Grade One students reading at running record Level 11-13	11%
Flagged Grade One students reading at running record Level 14-16	4%
Flagged Grade One students reading at a running record Level 17+	7%

Appendix 2

Assessment Schedule for the Observation Survey 2008-09

Senior Kindergarten

- Due September 30: Letter Identification**
 The letter identification results can be used to plan lessons and interventions that promote the acquisition of alphabet knowledge instead of introducing strategies such as a letter of the week.
- Due October 31: Concepts of Print**
 The Concepts About Print results can be used to plan teaching foci for whole class and small group shared reading lessons. In addition this information will guide other components of the comprehensive literacy program such as read aloud and independent reading.
- Due December 1: Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, Word Reading**
 The hearing and recording sounds in words results can be used to develop the teaching foci of modeled and shared reading and writing experiences. It can also guide the planning of small group instruction and individual conferences.

The word reading results can help teachers plan the word study portion of whole group and small group reading lessons. The results should also be considered when planning teaching foci for readers' and writers' workshops

- Due January 16: Writing Vocabulary**
 The Writing Vocabulary results can help teachers see how students are taking notice of visual differences in print and their understanding of the relationship between words. Classroom activities related to early writing such as experiences with Word Walls; Making Words" activities; and Writer's Workshop will enhance the repertoire of words students can write independently.

- Due April 6: Running Record**
 *Running records should be administered to any students who are ready *at any point during the year*.

Teachers will place running records results on the tracking wall in their schools by Term 3. Results can help guide teachers in small group formation, matching books to readers and teaching foci for other components of a comprehensive literacy program.

Grade One

Grade one teachers will complete all components of the Observation Survey by October 31, 2007 for students at risk (students who are reading at level 3 or below in a PM Benchmark Running Record).

Teachers should begin completing Observation Surveys with readers who are not yet at level 1, leaving level 3 readers until the last week of October.

Please note: In order to measure the success of classroom interventions, teachers are encouraged to administer these observation tasks at regular intervals, particularly for students who are at risk.

Appendix 3

CODE Project Monitoring for Administrators and Supervisory Officers

The CODE Project Focus continues to be on early intervention in Senior Kindergarten and Grade One with regards to:

- "Determining the extent to which the Web-Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) and the Observation Survey tasks align to assist teachers in planning differentiated instruction and early intervention for Senior Kindergarten and Grade One students who are at-risk".

Main Goals:

- Implementing the Tiered Approach To Intervention
- Facilitating PLCs that review assessment data to plan instruction and intervention
- Promoting sustainability by further extending the project out into the system during this, the final year of the project

Project Benchmarks for Administrators

Outcome	✓
Teachers have been provided with copies of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education For All Expert Panel Report, 2005 DDSB Literacy Profile 	
Kindergarten and Grade One teachers have had structured opportunities to learn about ways to link the WBTT and Observation Survey Assessments to practice through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> planned half day CODE PLCs classroom visits to see best practice; attending PD workshops/Networking sessions; regular, on-going school-based PD 	
"The Tiered Approach to Intervention" (Education for All, p. 60) is evident in the organization of support and in day-to-day classroom practice	

Maintaining Sustainability

Since the CODE project will end in June 2008, sustaining the positive changes that have occurred with regards to capacity building and student achievement in Kindergarten and Grade One over the past three years will need to be considered.

With this in mind, please respond to the following questions:

- What support plan is in place for students who are considered "at-risk" but who are not identified? (i.e. 2nd tier intervention)
- Beyond the end of this year, how will teachers be provided with support during the on-going assessment collection process? (for example: when teachers screen all students early in the year as part of the "First Tier of Intervention") ●

Comments about this article? Email Rankin_Kimberly@durham.edu.on.ca or crichton_doug@durham.edu.on.ca

NEOSA's Assistive Technology Project

Tom Steele, Superintendent of Education
Jim White, Author
North Eastern Ontario School Authorities

Moosonee District School Area Board served as the lead board for the CODE Special Education Project on behalf of North Eastern Ontario School Authorities (NEOSA):

Airy and Sabine District School Area Board	Whitney, Ontario
Asquith-Garvey District School Area Board	Shining Tree, Ontario
Foley District School Area Board	Foley, Ontario
Gogama District School Area Board	Gogama, Ontario
James Bay Lowlands Secondary School Board	Moosonee, Ontario
Missarenda District School Area Board	Missanabie, Ontario
Moose Factory Island District School Area Board	Moose Factory, Ontario
Moosonee District School Area Board	Moosonee, Ontario
Moosonee Roman Catholic Separate School Board	Moosonee, Ontario
Murchison and Lyell District School Area Board	Madawaska, Ontario
Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Board	Parry Sound, Ontario
Penetanguishene Protestant Separate School Board	Penetanguishene, Ontario

NEOSA is comprised of 12 individual school authorities spread over a large geographic area, from southern Georgian Bay to James Bay and from south of Algonquin Park to the eastern Lake Superior region. Each school authority is responsible for providing education to its students under requirements similar to those governing larger district school boards. Each school authority has a separate board of trustees and operates independently. School authorities are generally "single-school" boards and serve predominantly elementary students. Enrolment can vary from a handful of students in the smallest school to approximately 350 students in the largest school. Schools are usually located in small remote communities; some are accessible by rail or air only. Some schools in the far north serve mostly Aboriginal students, while others schools may have few or no Aboriginal students in attendance. All these factors make it challenging for school authorities to provide the necessary resources and supports required for students to be successful. By choosing to work together through NEOSA, our school authorities strengthen their ability to provide the best possible programs for their students.

Project Overview

In Year One (2005–2006) of NEOSA's Special Education Project, the focus was on developing awareness of the Education for All expert panel report. In-service was provided to school staff members. Presentations were made to school board trustees and school community stakeholders. Some additional in-service was provided to school staffs on various components of the report in relation to teaching/learning strategies that support inclusionary education for our students with special needs.

In Year Two (2006–2007), through a consultation process with school staffs and system administrators, it was determined that a specific focus would be better than a general approach. Based on a needs assessment, a decision was made to focus the project specifically on the implementation of computer-based assistive technology. Previous to this project, computer-based assistive technology did not exist in most of NEOSA's schools and only minimally in the few schools where it did.

Four demonstration site schools were selected to participate in this focus. Moosonee Public School (Moosonee District School Area Board) served as the demonstration site serving the northern region of NEOSA. Gogama Public School (Gogama District School Area Board) served as the demonstration site for the central region of NEOSA. St. Peter's School (Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Board) and Burkevale School (Penetanguishene Protestant Separate School Board) served as demonstration sites in NEOSA's southern region. The purpose of establishing demonstration sites within NEOSA was to develop internal expertise that could be shared with all schools, all staff, and all students throughout NEOSA.



In each demonstration site, a teacher-coach was chosen to take the lead in using Kurzweil print-to-voice software as well as other assistive technologies such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, Co:writer, Write:Outloud, and Inspiration with specific students. Teacher-coaches were provided with in-service on how to use these assistive technologies with their students. Schools were provided with the Kurzweil software, hardware, and peripherals.

Each teacher-coach focused on three to five students in each demonstration site. Students were selected on the basis that they were achieving below the provincial standard in reading and/or writing. Students were not necessarily deemed exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee. Students were given instruction on how to use assistive technology and had access to assistive technology as a learning tool.

In Year Three (2007–2008), the project expanded beyond the demonstration site schools. This allowed all 12 schools in NEOSA to become involved in the project. Resources were provided to ensure each school had Kurzweil software and the necessary hardware and peripherals. A contact teacher was identified in each school. The contact teacher was provided with in-service on the use of Kurzweil and other assistive technologies. Teacher contacts were required to select at least one student to participate in the project. Student growth was measured through a data collection process. Demonstration sites were provided with additional funding to further develop their expertise in computer-based assistive technology.

Data Collection

Growth in student achievement was measured by the CASI assessment instrument as well as a locally developed student observation survey. This data collection occurred at

regular intervals during the project. A locally developed survey was used to measure teacher-coach growth. Teachers self-evaluated their beliefs about the usefulness of assistive technology as well as their knowledge and skill in using it with students.

School program growth was measured also by survey data. Principals indicated how they perceived their schools were performing in areas such as universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and use of assistive technology.

Key Strategies

In order to build capacity, NEOSA focussed its resources to develop teacher knowledge and skills. School administrators encouraged and supported the sharing of knowledge and expertise among all staff members. Initially, much in-service was based on the 'train-the-trainer' model, but shifted to classroom-based learning for staff and students.

NEOSA formed a partnership with provincial demonstration schools. NEOSA demonstration site teacher coaches visited Robarts/Amethyst School to observe assistive technology in use with students at that school. Provincial school staff members from Trillium School visited demonstration site schools in NEOSA to provide on-site training to school staffs.



The project leader for the CODE Special Education Project met regularly with the project leaders for Literacy/Numeracy, Managing Information for Student Achievement, Student Success and School Effectiveness to ensure alignment, to provide support to each other, and to avoid duplication of valuable time and resources.

Principals ensured that assistive technology software/hardware was available in their schools. Many principals now budget to purchase assistive technology software/hardware with school funds. Some principals have reconfigured their computer labs so that more workstations are now available in the classroom, to improve students' access to assistive technology.

Principals and supervisory officers for the various NEOSA schools regularly updated educational stakeholder groups on the progress of NEOSA's assistive technology project and the positive impact assistive technology could have for many students. Parents were made aware of how assistive technology benefits their children so that they could provide support at home where needed. Trustees were informed about the value of assistive technology and provided support for assistive technology so that assistive technology was considered when making decisions about budget.

Project Results

Growth in student achievement varied. Some students made significant gains through the use of assistive technology, while others made fewer gains. Students who were highly motivated to use this technology demonstrated the most growth. Data indicates that generally, students using assistive technology showed improvement in reading, work habits, and test-taking. Teachers noted that students who used Kurzweil during EQAO testing were more successful and less frustrated. Teachers commented that for students who have learned to use assistive technology independently appear to be more motivated and less frustrated when completing daily assignments and tests.

Teacher-coaches indicated that students now have improved access to Kurzweil 3000 and other assistive technologies. Data indicated that teacher-coaches' knowledge and skill in using these technologies with their students had improved. Teacher-coaches expressed a need to receive more training on assistive technologies other than Kurzweil. Teacher-coaches have indicated there is more work to be done to familiarize all teachers on the value of using assistive technology with their students and to provide all teachers with in-service on using assistive technology as a learning tool for students.

Principals were asked to rate their schools' abilities to meet the needs of students using the principles outlined in Education for All. They rated their schools' abilities to use assistive technology, collaboration with other teachers, and assessment scheduling as their strongest areas. They rated their ability to provide a classroom based on principles of universal design for learning, and peer coaching as their weakest areas. Principals indicated improvement in most areas that were surveyed.

Future Directions

This data suggests that NEOSA's Assistive Technology Project needs to continue to provide in-service to its teacher-coaches who play a leading role in this project. Teacher-coaches have considerably developed their expertise in using assistive technology and need to continue to develop their knowledge of assistive technology to keep up with advances in technology. At the same time, NEOSA must focus on ways the teacher-coaches can share their knowledge with other staff members so that more students will be able to benefit from the use of assistive technology. Also, NEOSA must continue to focus on communication with educational stakeholders to ensure that they understand how assistive technology can benefit all students, especially those with special needs. This understanding is essential to ensure the sustainability of assistive technology.

As a result of the CODE project, in collaboration with other Ministry-supported NEOSA projects, teachers have had the opportunity to receive in-service on differentiated instruction, high-yield strategies for literacy and numeracy, and effective assessment practices. Resources have been provided to support a culture of universal design for learning. Teachers have begun to interact with each other as professional learning teams to discuss and share their instructional practices and to coach each other. Specific to the CODE project, the number of teachers who are able to use assistive technology with their students is increasing. The variety of assistive technologies used in classrooms is growing. Students are now learning how to use assistive technology to independently access the curriculum experience success. ●



Comments about this article? Email jim.white@ontario.ca

Four Questions to Focus, Change, and Transition Teacher Instructional Practice to Increase Student Achievement

Al Cesiunas, Superintendent of Education
Northwest Catholic District School Board

Alvin Toffler once wrote: *“Our moral responsibility is not to stop the future, but to shape it... to channel our destiny in humane directions and to ease the trauma of transition.”* Changes in board reporting requirements to the Ministry of Education, like MISA, business intelligence tools (such as COGNOS) to extrapolate data on student achievement, and the Ontario curriculum have created the capacity to focus schools to transition teachers and to change instructional practice to increase student achievement.

One of the roles of the supervisory officer is to develop a systematic evaluation of school effectiveness and to use and collect data to understand and assess the strengths and weaknesses of schools. This allows the superintendent and principals to examine the outcomes of a school self-review with provincial and other assessments. By developing four focus questions for school visits, we ensure that staff analyze data to develop changes and implement strategies to modify instructional practice.

Q1: What areas are you looking at with your school teams, and what improvement strategies could enhance student achievement? Provide evidence to show this relationship.

The first question allows principals to examine instructional methods such as differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment, along with working with staff to determine whether the strategies currently being used in the classroom are moving students forward. This question enables the school staff to examine if adequate resources exist in areas such as the library or whether additional resources, such as math manipulatives, are needed.

Q2: From examining your EQAO results, report card data, DRA, CASI, and information on individual students, how have your school teams identified problem areas in instruction and adjusted student instruction?

The second question allows teachers to identify the neediest students in the class or division and design specific professional development for teachers in the use of high-yield strategies with those identified students. Various data banks can be used to identify trends over time and shortfalls in student achievement. The collection of the various data banks enables teachers to examine discrepancies between classroom assessments and provincial assessments such as EQAO and CASI. These types of comparisons can be used to address concerns related to the assessment and learning. This approach also ensures that staff understand that there must be a correlation between reporting to parents on the provincial report card and data such as EQAO.

Q3: From the review of individual scores from the EQAO results, how do these results compare to the first or second term report card results for those students in reading, writing, and mathematics? What adjustments to instructional strategies have been made if you see students at the same levels? Provide evidence of adjustments to instructional strategies to meet student needs.

The third question enables principals and teachers to use the data warehouse to develop a focus on dialogue that examines the need for accurate assessments as well as authentic assessment practices by teachers in the classroom and by division. In addition, it targets students that are not improving with additional supports using strategies from documents such as Education for All, with a focus on differentiated instruction. A transition for teacher adjustment is developed by teachers to adjust day books, long-range plans, and school timetables to meet student and teacher needs.

Q4: As a school principal, how are you ensuring that teachers have regular opportunities to access and use data individually and in teams to review and gauge student learning and alter their instructional practices to increase student achievement? Provide evidence of these opportunities.

The final question ensures that the school principal becomes the instructional leader in the school and uses the data during individual and staff meetings to discuss the specific use of data. It also enables teachers to provide evidence to explain how students have moved along the achievement continuum and what strategies are used in the classroom to move students.

The question allows principals the ability to focus on specific areas such as student IEPs so that they reflect individual student needs, especially in the area of performance tasks which are reflective of student's strengths and are designed with individual learning styles in mind. It also develops a mindset for an entire school professional learning community discussion to build lateral and vertical capacity.

George Bernard Shaw wrote: *“People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them.”* The time has arrived where we can create the circumstances to change teacher instructional practices to increase student achievement, based on the foundations provided in the

Ontario Curriculum and the ability to access both provincial assessment data and other data from a school board data warehouse. ●

✉ Comments about this article? Email acesiunas@tncdsb.on.ca

Vivre l'inclusion au cycle moyen

Cynthia Roveda, directrice de l'éducation
Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord

Le Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord a élaboré un projet « Vivre l'inclusion au cycle moyen ...vers la réussite de l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers » dans le but de :

- permettre à l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers d'améliorer son rendement en matière de littératie et de vivre des réussites à l'intérieur du modèle d'inclusion;
- permettre à l'enseignant d'améliorer ses pratiques par l'entremise de la pédagogie différenciée;
- permettre la collaboration des membres du personnel au sein d'une communauté d'apprentissage professionnel dans le but de discuter de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage des élèves pour ainsi assurer la réussite de chaque élève.



L'implantation du projet s'est échelonnée sur une période de trois ans impliquant dans un premier temps le cycle moyen de quatre écoles, suivi de quatre autres écoles lors de la deuxième année pour enfin se terminer dans la troisième année avec la mise en œuvre dans toutes les écoles élémentaires du Conseil. « C'est grâce au projet CODE que le Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord a pu mettre en œuvre les principes directeurs et les recommandations retenus par la Table ronde des

experts tels que prescrit dans le document L'éducation pour tous, » de dire la direction de l'éducation, Mme Cynthia Roveda.

En début de ce projet, il va sans dire que la communauté scolaire a vécu une déstabilisation venant remettre en question la pratique pédagogique traditionnelle fondée sur les programmes et visant à desservir l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers par l'entremise d'un retrait avec l'enseignante-ressource. C'est grâce à un plan stratégique de mise en œuvre impliquant des formations professionnelles, l'élaboration de profils d'élèves et de classe, l'achat de ressources, un accompagnement continu et de dialogues pédagogiques au sein de communautés d'apprentissage professionnelles, que le projet a vu le jour.

Le personnel scolaire s'est vu appuyer par des formations sur mesure au niveau de la littératie, de la différenciation pédagogique et de la création de profils d'élève et de classe venant révolutionner leur enseignement dorénavant axé sur la réussite de l'élève. L'appui de l'enseignante-ressource au sein de la salle de classe ordinaire fut non seulement dirigé pour l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers, mais également auprès de l'enseignante titulaire afin de faciliter la différenciation pédagogique et par le fait même, assurer la réussite de tous les élèves. « C'est par l'entremise d'une pédagogie différenciée que l'enseignant(e) s'est senti(e) outillé(e) pour accueillir en classe l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers. L'élève a pu développer des liens d'appartenance avec son groupe classe et vivre des réussites qui ont contribué à rehausser son estime de soi. » de dire Mme Cynthia Roveda.

Au début du projet, la création de profils fut élaborée à partir de quelques données rudimentaires qui se sont avérées peu valables pour ensuite évoluer vers des outils beaucoup plus fiables et précis permettant de créer une pratique uniforme au sein du Conseil et de dresser un profil plus complet de l'élève et de classe. L'analyse des données des profils d'entrée et de sortie des groupes cibles du cycle moyen a révélé qu'il y avait eu une amélioration marquée dans le rendement de la lecture de l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers, soit une hausse moyenne de cinq niveaux de lecture par année, et ce, selon le niveau de gradation du MEO. De plus, un sondage fut administré aux élèves et aux parents des élèves du groupe cible afin d'évaluer leur taux de satisfaction face au modèle d'inclusion. Les résultats démontrèrent que la majorité des parents et des élèves étaient très satisfaits des bienfaits de ce modèle. « Mon enfant se sent beaucoup plus accepté par les autres depuis qu'il vit l'inclusion. Il aime faire la même lecture que ses amis, car cela lui permet de pouvoir discuter avec eux par la suite et il ne se sent pas différent. » de dire un parent. C'est grâce à l'analyse des données consignées dans le profil que le personnel scolaire a pu suivre plus facilement le progrès de l'élève en vue de connaître son niveau de rendement et de réajuster son enseignement. « Un accompagnement continu auprès du personnel enseignant, le modelage des stratégies de littératie en salle de classe régulière, l'achat des ressources nivelées et la création de tâches modifiées sont venus faciliter l'inclusion de l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers » affirme une direction d'école.

L'implantation de communautés d'apprentissage professionnel par l'entremise d'un leadership collégial a aussi permis au personnel scolaire de progresser et d'apprendre à se percevoir comme un membre d'une équipe travaillant pour atteindre un but commun, soit la réussite de tous les élèves. Cette vision commune est venue non seulement créer un climat de confiance et d'appui au sein de la communauté scolaire, mais également établir une collaboration plus étroite entre le foyer et l'école pour ainsi assurer l'inclusion réussie de l'élève en salle de classe ordinaire.

L'inclusion de l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers a créé un rapprochement entre les Services pédagogiques et le Service à l'élève du Conseil créant ainsi, une nouvelle équipe de collaboration ayant une vision commune axée sur la réussite de l'élève. Toujours dans l'esprit d'améliorer le rendement de l'élève, le Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord s'est montré très avant-gardiste en équipant toutes ses classes du palier élémentaire avec des tableaux interactifs ayant pour effet de répondre davantage aux divers styles d'apprentissage des élèves et de renforcer leur motivation ainsi que leur participation. De plus, le Conseil a équipé ses écoles avec 50 logiciels de reconnaissance optique de car-

« Vivre l'inclusion au cycle moyen, continued

actères par l'entremise d'une licence réseau, permettant ainsi aux élèves ayant des besoins particuliers d'apprendre de façon plus efficace et de développer leur autonomie.

C'est grâce au projet CODE que le Conseil a pu transformer son approche à l'égard des élèves en difficulté et de permettre à la majorité de ses élèves ayant des besoins particuliers de vivre l'inclusion. Le Conseil en est arrivé au constat que l'élève auparavant exclu, ne peut être accueilli que dans la mesure où les gens travaillent ensemble et peuvent compter les uns sur les autres pour trouver le soutien et conserver l'enthousiasme nécessaire. ●

✉ Comments about this article? Email rovedac@franco-nord.ca

Corrective Reading and Empower™

Mark Harper, Superintendent of Learning Services
Waterloo Region District School Board



With the benefit of CODE funding over the past three years, the WRDSB has invested in building the capacity of teachers to help struggling readers develop skills and strategies for reading. Two programs—Corrective Reading and Empower™—have been used in a coaching format to accomplish this goal.

In the first year of funding, we began with a small number of selected pilot sites and teachers. In the second and third years, we

built upon the reported successes of these programs and added sites and teachers. As a result, the programs grew out of the positive reputation that they gained with teachers, administrators, and parents and have become integrated into the work of the special education teachers at schools. This has served to build their sustainability in the system. In sum, over the past three years, 40 teachers have been trained in the fundamentals of the Empower program and more than 100 teachers have been trained in the Corrective Reading program.

Following the initial training for both programs, the teachers have had ongoing support and coaching in learning to deliver these programs to students. Coaches have shared their expertise with teachers by modelling teaching strategies and providing feedback to teachers after observing them deliver the program. Teachers reported that the coaching discussions and suggestions added to their knowledge and confidence in delivering the program. Ongoing support for teachers has been provided via the board's internal email system, enabling the sharing of questions, observations, frustrations, and successes amongst all teachers providing the two programs.

Corrective Reading Program

The Corrective Reading (CR) program provides teachers with materials to teach children the building blocks of reading—namely, the connection between sounds and symbols. The program focuses primarily on decoding strategies and has a basic comprehension component. This program was put in place for students who have experienced the rich language approach of the primary years but who continue to have significant delays in their reading. It uses direct instruction in a prescriptive progression of skill acquisition to ensure mastery at each level. Students progress once they have mastered requisite skills for the next level.

The CR program was selected as an effective tool for special education teachers to use because there was a noted need to provide a common method for building capacity within the special education service delivery model in each school. In addition, from the outset there was an expectation of data collection. Student progress is tracked regularly via placement test results and running record levels. Pre- and post-test data allows all stakeholders to readily see the dramatic results of students making significant gains in their reading.

The CR initiative is now in its fourth year. Currently, it is self-sustaining with a high level of participation by schools due to the effective coaching model, the reliable positive results, and the fact that the use of ongoing data aligns with identified system goals. While the initial instructional materials were provided to schools, each school site now funds all consumable materials related to running the program.

Empower™ Reading Program

The Empower™ program is a remedial reading program developed at The Hospital for Sick Children (HSC). This program is designed to address the core learning problems of struggling readers. Five specific, carefully sequenced decoding strategies and explicit metacognitive instructions are taught in order to give students the flexibility required in reading. The metacognitive strategies facilitate transfer of learning and ensure that each child takes ownership of the learned strategies in order to foster independence in reading text.

The Empower™ program is offered in a partnership with HSC. This partnership was pursued because the program was research-based, translating the knowledge gained from research into classroom practice. Given the parameters of the partnership, there is both rigorous training and coaching for teachers and ongoing data collection of students' progress. Teachers report dramatic changes not only in their students' reading ability but also in their sense of confidence. Teachers' self-reports indicated renewed enthusiasm and appreciation for teaching reading as well as significant strides in learning how to teach struggling readers effectively.

The change in students is evident very early in the delivery of the program. Classroom teachers comment on how eager the students are to participate in the regular classroom and to share their growing knowledge with their classmates. Teachers and school administrators ask to come and observe an Empower™ lesson in order to see what teachers are doing that could make such a significant overall change in such a short time. Likewise,

parents comment that their children are suddenly interested in reading books at home, sharing their new strategies and talking about the lesson of the day.

The Empower™ program is also in its fourth year. The partnership with HSC is continuing and we are growing the number of teachers who are trained each year and the number of sites where it is offered. We currently have teachers who operate as in-house master teachers, and our goal is to make our board self-sustaining in the training and coaching of teachers in the program next year.

The following quotes exemplify the power of these two programs for our students and teachers:

- "I want to learn how to read to get a job. Before, I didn't think that I could ever get a job. Now I know I can!" – CR student
- "That is the first time I've read in front of my class without my throat swelling up! And I knew I could do it! I love this program and now I really like to read!" – CR student
- "The Corrective Reading program is solid. It has made a difference in the lives of the kids in my class." – Classroom teacher
- "In a high needs school such as ours, this is the first time in their lives where students are experiencing a program that works for them!" – Principal of school using CR
- "Using the strategies makes you a good reader. You have to keep practising. Learning to read is like playing a sport. I feel awesome!" – Empower™ student
- "We learned a lot of strategies in reading this year. I learned that if you use good strategies and you put your mind to it, you can become an expert! For the first time I learned to believe in myself." – Empower™ student
- "I gave you a non-reader and you gave me back a child that enjoys reading chapter books." – Parent of an Empower™ student
- "Well, my daughter came home with these strategies and started using them all the time. I could hear her teaching her cousins to use them. I was surprised and thought to myself, 'how much more does she know.' I could hear her starting to use them for spelling and writing too. Learning to use those strategies built up her confidence. The turn around in her has been incredible. Truly, her self-esteem came up. She can do it now. She understands now." – Parent of an Empower™ student

These quotes testify to the impact for students of the Corrective Reading and Empower programs beyond instructional time. The experience of teaching with these programs has been not only empowering for students but also deeply inspirational for the teachers. ●

✉ Comments about this article? Email mark_harper@wrdsb.on.ca

All Pathways Lead to Success

All Pathways Lead to Success is a DVD training tool for classroom teachers working with students with learning disabilities, to help teachers understand the importance of differentiating the process, product, and content for students who learn differently. The video demonstrates the impact on and challenges of a learning disability for students when they are presented with an English writing assignment, and showcases the assistive technology they use to demonstrate their learning.

For more information, please contact:

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Watch for the next issue of CODE Chronicles, coming May 2009!