

« 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:

Eila Kyrzakos, Co-ordinator, Secondary Special Education
Rainbow District School Board
The Gord Ewin Centre for Education
275 Loach's Road
Sudbury, ON P3E 2P8
(705) 523-3308 ext. 8204
Fax (705) 523-3314
kyrzake@rainbowschools.ca

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