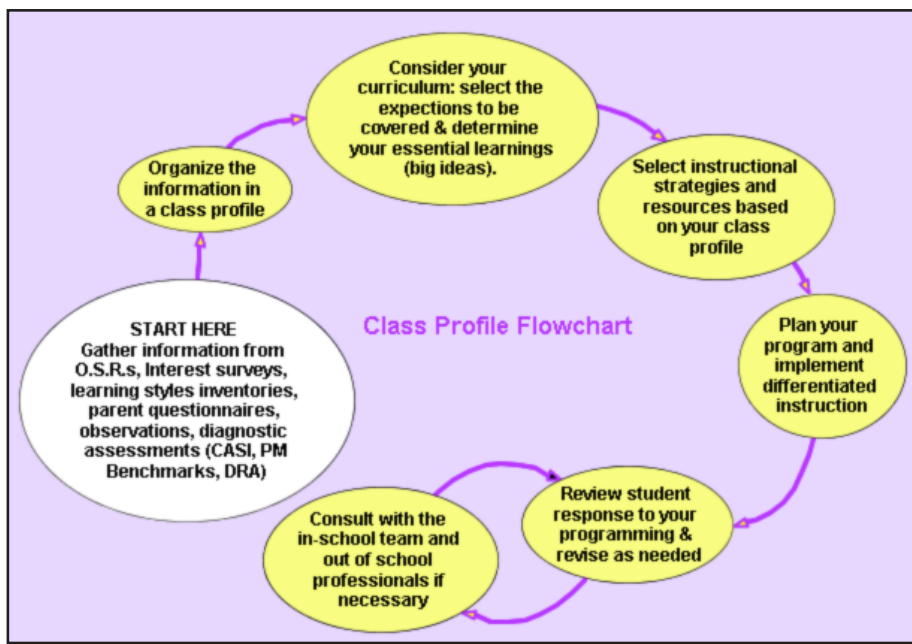
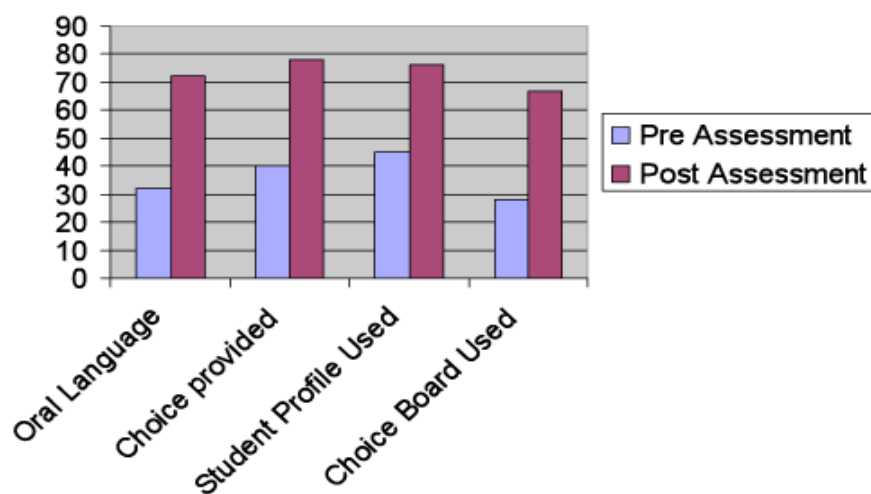


« Working and Learning Together, continued



Evidence of Success

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



Conclusion

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

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

Future Directions

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

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

Re-Culturing for Change

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In conclusion, this project allowed time for:

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

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

The CODE Chronicle of the Northwest School Authorities

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

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

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