THE CODE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROJECT

JK-GRADE 1 ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES (2009-2010)

JULY 2010

REPORT ON THE CODE PROCESS
AND STUDENT, PARENT AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES

EVALUATION REPORT

CODE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROJECT: JK-GRADE 1 ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Introduction

Acting as the independent evaluator for the CODE Special Education Project has been an opportunity to study collaboration and professional learning at the regional level. Although the focus was on regional processes and outcomes, school districts implemented their own CODE projects, and lead superintendents from every region of the province shared experiences and effective practices. As a result, at this pivotal time of exciting new directions for early learning in Ontario, the CODE project impacted at the school, district, regional and provincial levels to support JK-Grade 1 students.

I want to thank the CODE leadership team members, John Fauteux, Michelle Forge and Liliane Laforest, for their openness in involving me in project planning and decision-making at every step. It was a privilege to observe the vision and dedication of this team, to study team implementation of a major initiative, and to share in the team's excitement about changing the context in which young children learn.

I extend my thanks as well to the Ontario Ministry of Education for supporting this project, not only with funding to CODE, but also with active involvement. I want to note the ongoing leadership of Julie Williams, Manager, Program Policy & Coordinated Services Unit, Special Education Policy & Programs Branch. My special thanks go to Arkadi Toritsyn, Senior Policy Advisor, Special Education Policy and Programs Branch, for his helpful analysis and suggestions regarding the *Evaluation Matrix* and the questions for the structured interviews.

I acknowledge with gratitude the commitment and generosity of the lead superintendents in all seven regions. They welcomed me at regional meetings and provided detailed reviews of project processes and results. I thank all the superintendents, consultants, coordinators, system principals, resource teachers and others with a variety of titles from both special education and curriculum departments who took time from very busy schedules to participate in formal telephone interviews. There is a list of these participants, too many to mention here, in Appendix B. The interview responses provided another important source of data by which to measure the value and impact of the CODE project. The responses revealed the realities of the dynamic and complex environments in which people work, and helped to identify key "lessons learned" from the project.

Janet Glasspool
Project Evaluator
July 2010

CODE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROJECT
JK-GRADE 1 ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

THE ONTARIO CONTEXT

The CODE Special Education Project: JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies was aligned with the goals of the Ontario Ministry of Education: improved student achievement; reduced gaps in student achievement; and increased public confidence in, and support for, public education.

The project supports recommendations by Dr. Charles Pascal in his report, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*.

> We need to build on the best of what we have now and reposition existing resources. We must provide sound information at all levels to let parents know how their children are doing and help practitioners improve practice. We must inform taxpayers about the value of this effort, and keep them informed about how implementation is going....
>
> Ontario has the vision and the talent to do something very special, something sustainable and long-lasting for its children and families, something that will inspire those who live in other places to take note, as we move from words to action with our best future in mind. Charles Pascal. (2009). *With Our Best Future in Mind. Chapter Five, "From Words to Action".*

The project builds on "lessons learned" from the CODE Special Education Project (2005-2009) which focused on the implementation of the recommendations of *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6*.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CODE worked with Ministry of Education colleagues in the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch to develop the project description and timelines. An Advisory Committee made up of Ministry representatives and the CODE leadership team met on July 24 2009, and defined project goals: [1]

• Support implementation of effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for all students in JK-Grade 1;

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[1] Goals for the CODE project and "deliverables" for the evaluator are taken from *Schedule "A"* of the agreement between the Ministry of Education and CODE.

- Identify existing effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK-Grade 1;
- Share through leadership networks effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK-Grade 1;
- Build teacher/school board capacity to implement effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK-Grade 1; and
- Develop a monitoring tool to support boards in implementing effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK-Grade 1.

At the same meeting, the "deliverables" for the evaluator were identified:

- participate in the development of an assessment tool for school boards to measure implementation of evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK-Grade 1; and
- report on:
  - the CODE process used to accomplish the goals of the project; and
  - student, parent and system outcomes as per the goals of the project.

At the July 24 meeting the Advisory Committee agreed that the CODE JK-Grade 1 project would focus on work at the regional level. The project would involve seven regions, including French Language boards as one region. The Ministry would provide funding to all school boards and additional funding to the lead boards to allow them to assemble a working group from all boards in the same region.

EVALUATION OF THE CODE PROCESS

The final report of the CODE Special Education Project for 2006-2007 identified seven key factors required to replicate the success of that initiative in fostering collective responsibility, improving knowledge and practice, and changing the context within which people work.[2]

These same "lessons learned" make effective indicators by which to evaluate the CODE process used to accomplish the goals of the CODE Special Education Project: JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies (2009-2010). The seven factors are:

- Alignment with Key Partners;
- Leadership and Relationships;
- Project Design;
- Collaborative Effort;
- Monitoring and Self-evaluation;
- Context and Change; and
- Sustainability.

PROCESS INDICATORS

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[2] *The CODE Special Education Project 2006-2007.* pp. 16-17

1. **ALIGNMENT WITH KEY PARTNERS**

a) **Ongoing Support from the Ministry**

Ministry representatives from the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch and the Field Services Branch formed an Advisory Committee to set out broad goals and expectations for the project and to share in dialogues about important aspects of the work with the CODE leadership team and project evaluator. The CODE team valued the ideas and reflections provided by the Advisory Committee throughout the project, and considered that the partnership with the Ministry enhanced the implementation of project goals.

Ministry representatives joined face-to-face meetings and teleconferences with the CODE team and the lead superintendents for the seven regions and provided information and clarification as required.

Ministry representatives, including two special education regional leads (English and French), participated in the meeting on February 25 2010 when the lead board superintendents presented their reports on progress to date, and attended the May 18-19 meeting when the regions presented their final reports and findings.

b) **CODE Project Alignment with Other Ministry Initiatives**

At the February 25 2010 meeting of the CODE team, lead board superintendents and Ministry representatives, the superintendents described the connections being made between the CODE JK-Grade 1 project and the following Ministry initiatives:

Learning for All; Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT); Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario's Schools; Assessing Achievement in Alternative Courses and Programs; Autism Spectrum Disorders; the *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework;* the *Early Development Instrument (EDI)*, and *Politique d'Aménagement Linguistique.*
Meeting Notes: Meeting with Lead Boards. February 25 2010. pp. 6-7

Here is one example of the alignment of four projects, as implemented in the London Region:

- "Our region had the flexibility to align four projects—*Learning for* All, the CODE JK-Grade 1 project, Assessing Achievement in Alternative Programs, and the Autism Spectrum Disorders 'Connections' project. It is so much better for boards to see this alignment. A list of one-off projects can be overwhelming. We collected all the projects under the *Learning for All* umbrella. This alignment helps manage all these initiatives and provides clear direction for strategic planning."
Lead Superintendent, London Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010

At the February 25 meeting with lead boards the Ministry shared highlights of the Early Learning Program and its potential alignment with the CODE project.

c) Liaison with Other Ministry Projects

CODE requested a liaison meeting with the project leaders of other Ministry of Education initiatives. The Ministry arranged meetings on September 22 2009 and June 3 2010. These were extremely valuable meetings in which details about all the projects related to early learning were shared and discussed.

The meetings included representatives from the Early Learning Division, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Regional Offices, and the Special Education Branch. Some of the initiatives discussed at liaison meetings were: *Assessing Achievement in Alternative Courses and Programs*; the Early Learning Program, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat work on the Kindergarten Inquiry Project; the *Growing Success Grades 1-12* document (with a kindergarten component to be released in June, 2011); and the development of a new parent engagement policy for Ontario.

2. LEADERSHIP AND RELATIONSHIPS

a) Balancing Accountability and Creativity

The CODE leadership team understands the complexities of leadership and relationships. The team has years of experience with what Michael Fullan calls the "too tight—too loose dilemma".

> Focus the organization with sharp goals and tight accountability, and you get passive
> or alienated workers. Go for decentralized creativity, and you get drift and inertia. The
> key to achieving a simultaneously tight-loose organization lies more in *purposeful peer*

interaction than in top-down direction from the hierarchy. ...The nuance is that connecting peers with purpose does not require less leadership at the top, but rather more—more of a different kind.
Michael Fullan. (2008) *The Six Secrets of Change.* p. 41

Although participants reported initial confusion about project expectations, there is strong evidence that the CODE leadership team got this delicate balance right. The team combined a vision, based on deep knowledge about special education and professional learning issues, with creativity and flexibility about ways and means. CODE demonstrated that it knows how to set the context for "digging deeper" and is nimble in responding to regional concerns.

- "At first, project expectations seemed difficult to understand. They were rather vague. Some people like that, and others like to know exactly what to do. Our region adapted the original CODE template, with support from John Fauteux, our CODE leader. We finally focussed on four themes: screening processes, the developmental continuum, student profiles and family engagement."
  Lead Superintendent, Thunder Bay Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 15 2010.

- "The open-ended inquiry that was part of the CODE design produced some confusion at first about what outcome was expected from the project. However, we were glad to have the flexibility to adapt the original CODE template at the regional level. We found that the fundamental work we did as a region to redesign the CODE template helped people reflect on what they were doing right now with a critical eye and to ask, 'How would this look in my board?'"
  Lead Superintendent, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

- "I thought the design of the CODE project was excellent. There were challenges because of time and wondering, 'What exactly are we trying to produce?' But this design allowed for creative thinking and opened things up. It facilitated thinking more openly."
  Superintendent of Education/Special Education, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

A review of the evaluator's notes from project meetings reveals the CODE leadership team repeatedly trusting the interactive process in the regions. The team refused to limit creativity by setting out detailed guidelines for project outcomes and, as a result, fostered a context in which regions could focus on what was important to them in relation to JK-Grade 1 assessment and intervention.

- "Michelle Forge [CODE project co-chair] clarified that the lead board superintendent convenes a group with representation from each board in the region...That regional working group, with the lead S.O., will create a monitoring tool that is a synthesis of the most effective practices in the region. She noted that there will not be the same practices in all the regions. They will all have the same goals, but different management and practice. Then the lead board S.O.s representing each region in the province come together, along with the CODE team, to create a new synthesis, a monitoring tool for JK-Grade 1 assessment and intervention across the province."
  Meeting Notes: Initial Meeting of Lead Boards. September 30 2009. p. 3

- "The group discussed Ministry deliverables and the format of the final monitoring framework. ...The CODE team outlined the reasons why it would be unwise to try to force a particular template on the regional discussions before the two-day meeting in May. The May meeting will develop an overview composite of the best work of all regions—the components that all regions agree are essential for an effective monitoring framework."
  Meeting Notes: Ministry/CODE Teleconference. March 3 2010. p. 2

b) **CODE Relationships**

Lead superintendents for the different regions commented on CODE's province-wide perspective, the knowledge that CODE has about people and processes in boards, and the trusting relationships that have been established with CODE over the years.

- "CODE is in a great position to lead a project. People in the boards know these CODE leaders. ...'CODE Special Education Project' means something to people. They know the good work that has been done. CODE is good at bringing boards together in a collaborative way. CODE is always current on key issues."
  Lead Superintendent, North Bay/Sudbury Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 15 2010.

- "CODE is in a good position to work with boards. They know the people in different boards and know which people to use as leaders to get a broad perspective across the province. CODE leaders can reflect on the data with knowledge of what it means. We have different conversations with CODE people than we might with others—very frank conversations about the issues."
  Lead Superintendent, Thunder Bay Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 15 2010.

At the same time, project participants commented about the influence of the CODE team and CODE's unique ability to ensure that project goals were met.

- "The CODE leaders worked with the lead superintendents all the way along, and provided input and support throughout the project. It helped to have John Fauteux, [CODE co-chair], at regional meetings. John has a lot of credibility in this region and is good at getting people to come together. In one or two instances he was key in ensuring everybody was at the table."
  Academic Coordinator, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

- "John Fauteux directed attention to the timeline prepared by the CODE team, *Early Learning Project Planner*, and stated there would be conference calls at intervals and that the CODE lead team members would attend regional meetings. There will also be a mid-point meeting with all lead boards."
  Meeting Notes: Initial Meeting of Lead Boards. September 30 2009. p. 3

- "John mentioned that the most useful and effective aspects of former CODE reports were the 'Lessons Learned', which are themes and recommendations from the boards. He said that superintendents would expect to see 'Lessons Learned' in this report as well."
  Meeting Notes: Ministry/CODE Teleconference. March 3 2010. p. 3

3. **PROJECT DESIGN**

There were several key components of the design of the CODE Special Education JK-Grade 1 project that contributed to its success: the regional process, the *Collection of Evidence Template*, and responses to changing circumstances.

a) **The Regional Process**

The regional design of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project was based upon a highly successful earlier initiative in the Barrie region.

- "Michelle Forge commented that an educator who was involved in the earlier alternative assessment project [Alternative Curriculum Expectations (ACE)] reported that the dialogue and reflection at the Barrie regional level produced the most rewarding professional learning of her life. The group built trust and challenged each other. There was significant movement philosophically as a result. Michelle noted that the design of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project was based upon the success of the ACE project in the Barrie region—i.e., the CODE team realized that the JK-Grade 1 project had to involve work and reflection on practice at the <u>regional</u> level."
  Meeting Notes: Barrie Regional Meeting. Newmarket. April 28 2010.

Across the province, there was high praise for the regional design of the CODE project:

- "I was really attracted to the idea of professional learning at the regional level. People are saying, 'I have learned as a result.' It provided an important dialogue to question current practice—and this was a tremendous bonus and elevation over other processes that only occurred at the board level."
  Lead Superintendent, Ottawa Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 17 2010.

- "The regional networks were great. We made connections among boards. I work in a very small board and it was interesting to see that a much larger board had similar needs and was doing a similar project about the tracking of information from kindergarten teachers to grade one."
  Coordinator of Elementary Curriculum and Program Services JK-3, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 28 2010.

- "There was a real need to keep sharing best practices for the whole province. How can we keep this going? We are just beginning. The boards want to work more when the framework comes out."
  Meeting Notes: Final Meeting with Lead Boards. Mississauga. Presentation of the final report for the French Language Region. May 18 2010.

- "We benefitted from the opportunity to get together, to share ideas and decide on next steps. It was really interesting to see what was common across the boards and to see the gaps. It was good as well to hear what was happening across the province when the lead superintendent for our region would come back from meetings at the provincial level. That was really valuable. I always came away with more insights and new learning and I was always thinking about the next steps for us."
  Curriculum Administrator, North Bay/Sudbury Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 29 2010.

On May 18-19 2010 the regional representatives all came together to make their final presentations, highlight their findings related to the five elements, describe project experiences, and develop recommendations for the final CODE report. On May 19 the regional teams made the following statements about the regional process:

- Effective process that allowed self-reflection at board levels—looked at own practices
- Tremendous sharing of resources and practices
- Helped build relationships across boards and at different levels
- Intentional professional learning
- Forced collaboration between curriculum and special education
- Will affect implementation of the framework at the regional level
- Contribution to a reflective process regarding evidence-informed beliefs and practices
- Opportunity for us to model a professional learning community at the regional level
- Created expectations by participants to continue the collaborative work that was started
- Created expectations for next steps--Ministry funding, training

Meeting Notes: Final Meeting with Lead Boards. Mississauga. May 19 2010.

One lead superintendent summarized this discussion:

- "People wouldn't have done this work without the leadership of the CODE team. The CODE team has really kept the regional focus alive. It has been very valuable to work in this way at the regional level."
Meeting Notes: Final Meeting with Lead Boards. Mississauga. May 19 2010.

b) **The *Collection of Evidence Template***

Ministry representatives and the CODE leadership team identified the key elements for the project at the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on July 24 2009. Then the CODE leadership team, with input from lead board superintendents and the project evaluator, designed the *Collection of Evidence Template for Lead Boards.* The template was "designed as an outline to guide district and regional thinking about current effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention practices; to inform a provincial description of evidence-informed practices; and, to promote collaborative reflection on and exploration of the JK- 1 assessment and instructional intervention process".
CODE Special Education Project: JK-Grade 1. *Collection of Evidence Template for Lead Boards.* p. 1

There were many reports across the province about the value of the template as an important aspect of the CODE project design.

- "The greatest achievement in our region was using the template with the five elements. This was an excellent filter for our thinking about what practices were effective. Also, a great achievement was the opportunity to review what we have in place now with the template in mind. The CODE project was very timely."
Lead Superintendent, North Bay/Sudbury region: interview with the project evaluator on June 15 2010.

- "…the proposed self-reflection tool developed by the Greater Toronto region boards (based on the original CODE assessment template) is a valuable template to use in the planning and evaluation of school board projects/initiatives that focus on JK-Grade 1 students."
Final Report. Toronto and Area Region. May 2010. p. 23

Comments about the use of the template beyond the scope of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project were particularly revealing.

- "Focus on the five elements drove our thinking and provided a 'check-guide' for future purchases and forced us to stop and fine tune the assessment tools we have had in place."
  Final Report. North Bay/Sudbury Region. May 2010. p. 9

- "The monitoring framework will support great decisions for kids because there will be a clear understanding about the need for a comprehensive approach, covering the five elements in the CODE template. The framework means that even at the class level, the board is connecting with community partners. ... We will monitor the program in this way, reflecting on the questions for each element. It is important to have this framework to support work with different audiences. It is a great planning and evaluation tool. We have used it in other projects to see if all the dots are in place. We can use it to support broader learning for students of all ages."
  Academic Coordinator, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

c) **Responses to Changing Circumstances**

The CODE team demonstrated its flexibility in responding to changing circumstances during the project year. The biggest change was the introduction of the Early Learning Program. Michelle Forge described the need for a change of focus at the February meeting.

- "Michelle [CODE project co-chair] said that the team needs to revisit the template and add new experiences, such as the new focus on community involvement. Michelle said, 'This is emergent design and that is what we do best at CODE.'... Michelle stated that the Early Learning Program adds a new component to the CODE project. The group is really talking now about a framework within the context of the Early Learning Program."
  Meeting Notes: Meeting with Lead Boards. February 25 2010. p. 9

The regions and boards were quick to integrate new directions for the Early Learning Program into their CODE projects.

- "It was valuable to start the discussion about the Early Learning Program in the CODE JK-Grade 1 project. The CODE project created a focus on early screeners."
  Special Education Resource Teacher, Thunder Bay Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 16 2010

- "When we agreed as a team on the final compilation of the assessments and interventions, we dissected the new Early Learning Program curriculum and this led to the oral language focus for our product. We found that oral language ran through the whole ELP curriculum."
  Special Education Facilitator, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

- "Everything we did is based on the draft of the Early Learning Program….The focus needs to be on the developmental continuum in a play environment. We used the *ELECT* document as a guide and focussed on child development. The speech-language pathologists were part of our project when we developed the 'check-ins' for assessment data for kindergarten students."
  Curriculum Consultant Early Years, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 29 2010.

4. **COLLABORATIVE EFFORT**

a) **Provincial Network**

The lead superintendents and CODE team developed a province-wide network over the course of the JK-Grade 1 project. In addition to sharing details of regional projects, the superintendents were involved in province-wide planning and decision-making about ways to highlight effective practices and support learning in the early years.

During the initial meeting on September 30 2009 lead superintendents had input into the regional process, their own roles, key project goals, and the vision of the final monitoring tool. The October 13 2009 teleconference focused on reviewing the indicators and reflective questions related to the five elements, as set out in the *Collection of Evidence Template for Lead Boards.* The CODE team responded to suggestions for changes, additions, and deletions. The March 25 2010 teleconference focussed on planning for the final presentations on May 18-19. There was extensive discussion of the most effective ways to present regional reports and develop final recommendations.

b) **Regional Networks**

A researcher for the Toronto and Area Region conducted a series of telephone interviews with CODE JK-Grade 1 project leaders or designates in the Toronto and Area boards. Interviewees were asked to evaluate the processes involved in the regional team collaboration. The researcher summarized her findings:

- "When participants were asked to comment on what they learned about their own board and from other boards through participation in the regional team processes for the CODE JK-1 project, the overall feedback indicated that their participation was successful in terms of sharing practices and building connections."
  Research report on telephone interviews conducted in Toronto and Area Region on April 12-13 2010. Final Report. Toronto and Area Region. May 2010. p. 19

When the project evaluator, Janet Glasspool, conducted telephone interviews with lead superintendents and board representatives on the working committees in every region, all of the interviewees had positive comments about the regional collaboration. Many reported that this collaboration was the "greatest achievement" of the CODE project.

c) **Special Education and Curriculum Collaboration**

The CODE JK-Grade 1 project demonstrated the most important reason for the connection between special education and curriculum departments. Special education strategies support everyone in curriculum. This becomes a professional conversation about the most effective ways to help children, beginning by providing differentiated tier 1 instruction for all students.

Collaboration between the two departments at every level was a key goal of the CODE team. Team member Liliane Laforest was praised by leaders of the French Language project for her dedication to overcoming initial problems about special education/curriculum jurisdiction. She

supported the lead superintendent in changing the focus from concerns about ownership of the project to firm decisions to work together.

- "We came to a new understanding when we heard the discussion between special education and program. After big problems at the beginning in deciding whether the CODE project was special education or program, people were saying, 'We want to work together'".
  Director of Services, French Language Region: interview with the CODE evaluator on June 30 2010.

There were reports from every region about the value of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project in creating or enhancing collaboration between special education and curriculum.

- "The project encouraged having special education and curriculum together at the table and this builds toward effective board and school improvement plans."
  Superintendent of Schools, North Bay/Sudbury Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 29 2010.

- "What was new in terms of collaboration in the CODE JK-Grade 1 project was the involvement of curriculum, special education and speech-language pathologists—all meeting outside their own boards. There was also a unique collaboration between small and large boards. Cross-board connections were made between people who otherwise wouldn't have met. All boards in the region had involvement from both curriculum and special education and board projects were often led by curriculum people."
  Lead Superintendent, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator. June 18 2010.

5. MONITORING AND SELF-EVALUATION

There was a great deal of evidence—from presentations at meetings, final reports, and telephone interviews—that the CODE JK-Grade 1 project fostered reflective conversations and self-evaluation, both at the regional and district levels.

- "The project promoted self-monitoring. We benefitted from thinking about the goals we could set—for example, incorporating the work of speech-language pathologists more directly in the classroom and making connections between the program and special education departments. Dialogue about the different tools causes you to reflect on your own tools and you think about how to use them better."
  Special Education Facilitator, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

- "The CODE project was all about self-monitoring. That is exactly what we did from one meeting to another. We kept putting in changes as a result of reflecting together. For example, at first we started by identifying a number of assessment and intervention tools and strategies in all the boards. Then we decided we needed some criteria by which to evaluate the tools and we decided to use the five elements as a filter. Then we decided to have each board recommend only one tool or strategy, including the evidence for its use."
  Lead Superintendent, North Bay/Sudbury Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 15 2010.

Boards in three regions (French Language, London, and Toronto and Area) used the *Stage of Implementation Continuum* that was developed during the CODE Special Education Project 2006-2007 to obtain data about current practices related to the five elements.

As a result of the CODE project, each board in the London region has a report on its own stages of development for identified practices and can compare that data with the regional report. Based on percentages at the two lowest levels, the Preparation and Initiating stages, the regional data indicate that one area for growth is the use of "ongoing dialogue and reflection about the effectiveness of assessment tools and strategies at the school level". Percentages at the Implementing and Sustaining stages show that one of the greatest strengths in the region is "a clear process for entry into school".

Implementation data collected for the London Region CODE project, following a reflective discussion in each board. Final Report. London Region. May 2010. pp. 7-27

6. CONTEXT AND CHANGE

The CODE Special Education JK-Grade 1 project changed the context of discussion in regions across the province.

- "During the project I experienced principals, coordinators, superintendents and others involved in detailed discussions. You get cross-connections at different levels, not just superintendents or consultants. These networks don't happen unless you have these CODE projects. We don't get together for these deep discussions. Discussion embeds the learning so much more. It means that people are so much more likely to go back and put the learning into practice."
  Superintendent of Education/Special Education, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator. June 25 2010.

There were many examples of individual boards being motivated to change practice because of the quality of the interaction at the regional level.

- "There were many big 'aha' moments for boards in the region when speech-language pathologists from York Region presented their program for oral language development. People were asking, 'Can we have that?' [A speech-language pathologist] has unpacked a very complex subject in a way that is comparatively easy to understand—'The Language Chain' related to the 'Four Cornerstones of Literacy Success' [described in the Barrie Region Final Report]. At one regional activity, [the pathologist] provided a hands-on activity that represented links in the language chain. From this activity, participants realized that we all have different language chains and that if a piece is weak or missing, the other links will be affected."
  Lead Superintendent, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

- "Some boards reported that they had evaluated their whole program delivery as a result of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project. These were boards where both the superintendent and director of services took on leadership for the project. That instructional leadership was identified as the reason for their success."
  Lead Superintendent, French Language Region, reporting on the April 20-21 French Language regional meeting: interview with the project evaluator on April 23 2010.

In addition, there were many comments during the telephone interviews that the flexibility that was built into the CODE project meant that boards in each region could work on JK-Grade 1 projects that were really important change initiatives for them. They were able to meet key needs, either by beginning something new, building upon earlier work in the district, or by aligning one or more other projects with the CODE implementation.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

a) Sustainable Practice

The CODE JK-Grade 1 project fostered sustainable leadership as described in *The Fourth Way*:

> …change without leadership has no chance of being sustainable. The leadership agenda is the change agenda. They are one and the same. The reform environment has to create conditions where leaders do not merely implement external mandates, but have the capacity and flexibility to make changes themselves.
> A. Hargreaves & D. Shirley. (2009). p. 95

Many participants commented about the CODE initiative as a vehicle for ongoing change.

- "There is a different kind of cycle that was addressed as well in the CODE project. That is people discussing board structures with a critical eye, going back and revising processes because of the dialogue. We were able to adapt the CODE template in this region, and if you look at the monitoring tool we developed [Appendix B, Final Report. Toronto and Area Region], you see the status update box. You are never satisfied that you can let a project lie. You are never satisfied because there is always another cycle. How do you get to the sustaining stage? You go back to building capacity."
  Academic Coordinator, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

- "The region would need more time to get evidence beyond the board level—to pilot a particular tool across the region and conduct research. The boards are discussing now the possibility of putting a regional team together to do more harmonization of the lists of tools and strategies prepared during the CODE project."
  Lead Superintendent, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

b) Knowledge Mobilization in Districts and Schools

All of the regions shared effective assessment and intervention strategies as a result of the CODE project. There were many reports that tools and strategies presented at the regional meetings were being incorporated into the CODE projects at the board level.

- "After regional meetings we shared web-sites, information on memory sticks and great long e-mail attachments that clogged your e-mail, all about effective practices that were shared. The project gave participants a real flavour of what best practices were being used. The connections continued and we are using some of the information in schools. In our board, we identified eight schools and used

material directly from the regional sessions. The CODE project lent itself to that kind of implementation because part of the project was at the school board level."
System Principal Learning Support Services, Ottawa Region: interview with the project evaluator on July 5 2010.

Regions developed websites or electronic databases to provide ongoing support for the sharing of knowledge among boards in the region for years to come.

• "The biggest 'aha' moment for me, after visiting all 16 boards in the region, was realizing what pockets of excellence are out there in the boards. Boards don't even realize how innovative some of these tools and practices are. ...It is very important to have a vehicle like the new website developed in the London region to get these materials into the hands of people in other boards.... When people at the last regional meeting for system leaders for both curriculum and special education saw the website, they were really pleased and said what a super resource it is."
Consultant to the London Regional Special Education Council: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

• "The Barrie region report provides a list of commercially created and board-developed assessment tools and a list of strategies and interventions. The lead S.O. for the CODE project presented these resources electronically at the RSEC meeting in April. The resource will have live links to further information about the use of each tool. Everyone at the RSEC meeting was thrilled and said, 'Wow! This is great!'"
Superintendent of Education/Special Education, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator. June 25 2010.

c) **Knowledge Mobilization across Ontario**

The CODE co-chairs, John Fauteux and Michelle Forge, presented information about the CODE JK-Grade 1 project and led a round table discussion at the meeting of the Ontario Council of Administrators of Special Education (OCASE) at the end of May.

The final report of the CODE Special Education JK-Grade 1 project will be shared widely across the province.

Results of the CODE JK-Grade 1 initiative will also be sustained in *CODE Chronicles*, which codifies information and supports the momentum for special education projects across Ontario. *CODE Chronicles* is accessible on the CODE website. www.ontariodirectors.ca Each issue is presented in a PDF file which may be downloaded in whole or in parts.

• "[Lead superintendent] stated that her board uses the *Chronicles* to get measures of what other boards are doing. Also, staff members capture the clips and make decisions about visiting other boards to observe practices. Articles are used as well to promote dialogue—for example, with SEAC."
Meeting Notes: Meeting with Lead Boards. February 25 2010. p. 8

IMPLICATIONS: THE CODE PROCESS

1. **Continuing the Ministry/CODE Partnership**

The momentum that has been built with CODE special education projects 2005-2010 highlights the benefits of having the Ministry of Education continue to allocate funding and responsibility to CODE to design projects to support the goals of the Early Learning Program and special education initiatives.

CODE is uniquely positioned to serve in an advisory capacity and as a change agent. There are many aspects of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project that connect with, and can inform, current Ministry directions for the Early Learning Program; for example:

o supporting teachers in becoming more articulate about assessment and intervention strategies, with the result that parent engagement and confidence is increased and parents are able to help at home because they understand the goals of the program;
o connecting the CODE JK-Grade 1 work on assessment and intervention with the *Growing Success* initiative;
o continuing the alignment with *Learning for All; Assessing Achievement in Alternative Courses and Programs; Autism Spectrum Disorders;* and *Early Learning for Every Child Today* that has been a feature of regional work this year; and
o building on the CODE project findings about using the expertise of speech-language pathologists to provide modelling and coaching to classroom teachers regarding oral language assessment and intervention.

2. **Continuing Ministry/CODE Liaison Meetings**

• It is important for the Ministry of Education to continue to involve CODE in regular Liaison Committee meetings and to work with CODE to design strategies to codify, communicate and promote knowledge about the connections that link all Ministry of Education efforts in support of early learning. It is not reasonable to expect individual boards to make all these connections.

STUDENT, SYSTEM AND PARENT OUTCOMES

The following pages provide a few representative examples of student, system and parent outcomes as excerpted from and confirmed by:
• regional reports;
• board reports provided to the project evaluator by the CODE leadership team; and
• structured telephone interviews conducted by the project evaluator.

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES FROM REGIONS AND BOARDS	
EFFECTIVE PRACTICES	**LESSONS LEARNED**
STUDENT OUTCOMES o **Barrie Region**: electronic compilation of assessment and intervention tools (criteria for inclusion: focus on strategies related to four essential evidence-based predictors of success in early literacy development: alphabet knowledge, print awareness, phonological awareness, and oral language) o includes links to support materials o regional tool/strategy with proven success: Alternative Curriculum Expectations/Assessment Companion Tool (ACE/ACT) supports students with language skills below typical entry level o **York Region DSB**: "The Language Chain" clarifies complex ideas; supporting intervention resources include Drama Centres, Oral Language Checklist, Communication and Literacy for ALL series	o recognize that links in the language chain lay the foundation for all learning o use a multidisciplinary team within a tiered approach to provide collaborative opportunities for student observation, data collection, strategies and interventions o allocate time for speech-language pathologists to model strategies for all students
o **London Region** website of assessment and intervention tools and strategies (criteria for inclusion: clear links to intervention and the *School Effectiveness Framework,* usefulness at the system level) o also includes school entry processes, board procedures, PowerPoint presentations, videos, resource materials o **Lambton-Kent DSB**: special education and program departments found that explicit teaching of vocabulary through language organization (categorize, associate, compare/contrast) using experiential learning activities created a framework for development of cognitive skills. Speech-language pathologists guided teachers in planning instruction, resulting in "significant improvement with all participating students".	o ensure that assessment informs teacher instruction o create effective electronic student and class profiles to support analysis and identification of patterns o promote collaborative involvement of other professionals o use high-yield strategies for instruction
o **North Bay/Sudbury Region** compilation of assessment and intervention practices (criteria for inclusion: one recommended strategy per board, with evidence; and use of the five elements to screen for comprehensive impact) o includes description of the practice, alignment with the five elements and evidence of success o **Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic DSB**: phonological screening and 8 week intervention sessions throughout the school year. Involved collaboration of speech-language pathologists, teachers, literacy partners, resource teachers, and resulted in "engagement of all learners", "progression toward reading benchmarks" and "raised teacher expectations for oral language".	o use the five elements as a screening tool o support school teams in collaboratively implementing and tracking assessment tools and interventions o integrate the work of curriculum and special education departments o support teachers in learning to model strategies and expand students' responses
SYSTEM OUTCOMES	

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES FROM REGIONS AND BOARDS	
EFFECTIVE PRACTICES	**LESSONS LEARNED**
o **Toronto and Area Region**: final CODE report provides "lessons learned" for each of the five elements, with detailed examples from boards in the region for each of those lessons o **Halton DSB**: teachers and consultants co-planned purposeful, play-based classroom experiences to increase oral language skills. Data was collected through observations, conversations, videotaping. Through teacher moderation, using success criteria they developed, teachers found that "overall the play- based centres increased the use of oral language and the vocabulary used in focus lessons was …transferred to the centre conversations". As a result, teachers questioned the use of the assessment tool the board currently uses as a screening tool.	o use multiple measures of data to inform instructional decision-making o understand that a developmental approach takes time and careful attention to students' responses o support classroom research and encourage teachers to question and adapt tools and strategies
o **Thunder Bay Region**: effective strategies used in the region to build teacher capacity include: professional learning community meetings based on data; the use of school and class profiles, with data collected electronically; the use of literacy leads/coaches to support teachers with programming; the Teacher Learning and Leadership Project that includes problem-based inquiry with students, team planning and tracking of student work over time. o **Thunder Bay Catholic DSB**: the Web-Based Teaching Tool has been the mandated screener used by kindergarten teachers, but use of the interventions was limited. The project enhanced use of the interventions provided within the WBTT program. Teachers shared results of interventions at in-school team meetings.	o support teachers with teaching strategies and interventions to apply at various stages of a child's development, including social/emotional development o be sensitive to issues relating to culture when interpreting and intervening based on data
o **French Language Region**: La présentation de quelques outils d'évaluation et de pistage fut une activité de grande importance pour tous les participants. Les questions, les idées avancées furent motivantes et inspirantes pour tout le groupe. Le projet a favorisé une rencontre pédagogique provinciale qui a permis des discussions sur un sujet de l'heure important et a été une occasion de croissance professionnelle. o **CSC Franco-**Nord: <u>Tableau synoptique d'évaluation</u>. Le conseil a développé un tableau pour guider le personnel dans l'administration des évaluations diagnostiques, formatives et sommatives selon une ligne de temps. Le tableau fait le lien avec toutes les ressources nécessaires à la mise en œuvre de la programmation prescrite par le conseil.	o véhiculer le même message à tous les niveaux de l'organisation. o assurer la collaboration des secteurs EED et programmation. o assurer les suivis nécessaires pour appuyer la mise en œuvre des initiatives et programmes. o offrir de l'accompagnement, des suivis et de la formation en cours d'emploi.

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES FROM REGIONS AND BOARDS	
EFFECTIVE PRACTICES	**LESSONS LEARNED**
PARENT OUTCOMES o **Ottawa Region**: the region identified best practices in establishing a procedure or similar document in collaboration with community agencies, accessible to the public, which outlines the entry into school process for early learners from JK-Grade 1. To be included: outline of timelines, tasks, and community agency or partner role responsibilities in implementing the transition process; protocol for case conference meetings as appropriate; communication materials for parents; etc o **Catholic DSB of Eastern Ontario**: a multidisciplinary team developed a visual assessment portfolio for JK-Grade 1 to support a Tier 3 approach with additional strategies and consultation for parents. The visual portfolio has graphs, charts and next steps that highlight the strengths and needs of students and resources to assist in communicating with parents.	o align entry procedures with the Early Learning Program initiative o promote inter-ministerial collaboration o use the entry process as a foundation for student profiles and early intervention as required o identify resources for parents, teachers, early childhood educators, and community partners

OVERVIEW FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This brief sample of regional and board results demonstrates some overarching trends that were highlighted over and over again in meetings, final reports and formal interviews.

a) **Oral Language Foundation**

As the chart describing a few representative projects demonstrates, there was a major focus on the importance of oral language in the early years as the foundation of literacy and of all school learning. There were very promising examples of effective practices with proven outcomes for students and teachers.

- "York Region has been working on oral language development for five years and has data and clear evidence to support the tools and strategies being used. There has been significant improvement in student achievement in oral language as a result. There is evidence from teacher experience, from administrators, and from EQAO testing because the first set of students who were in the pilot program five years ago have made significant gains in EQAO results."
Lead Superintendent, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

- "Hanen training was provided to eight teachers and four educational assistants…Hanen training was provided by two speech pathologists. Prior to training each participant was asked to submit a fifteen minute video of [him or her] participating with a group of children in an oral language activity. Following three days of training each participant was to submit a second fifteen minute video (pretest/post test). All videos were scored and compared by speech pathologist [name] using the 'Teacher Interaction and Language Rating Scale'. …Most of the participants experienced growth in the nine categories of the rating scale. It was evident that participants benefitted from the modeling and use of oral language stimulation strategies."

Final Report. Upper Canada District School Board, Ottawa Region. May 2010.

b) Entry and Transition Planning

The introduction of the Early Learning Program during the project year highlighted the importance of entry and transition planning, parent engagement and collaboration with community partners. While many regions identified involvement of parents and community agencies as an area for growth, there was evidence of effective practice.

- "Provisions for Students with Special Needs
  - o Pre-school transitions (structured process for communicating with day care and other community agencies about students with known special needs)
  - o Pre-school visits (as needed)
  - o Case conferences (as needed)
  - o Transition process for students transferring from Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) program for pre-school students with Autism
  - o Referrals made through the Fair Start program for students who have been red-flagged as at risk in the various domains."
  Final Report. Thunder Bay Region. May 2010. p. 4

- "Creation of 'Train' brochure and poster that outline agencies and services provided for students as they transition into school; common school entry forms for agencies and three coterminous school boards. Brochures will be provided for all JK teachers, SERTS, and parents as part of the Kindergarten registration kits." [The train brochure lists community and coterminous school board supports for parenting, hearing, physical growth and development, vision, speech and language, learning and thinking, social/emotional behaviour, dental, and transition to school, each on a boxcar of the train.]
  Final Report. Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, Barrie Region. May 2010.

c) Site-based Professional Learning

There were many comments about the limited effectiveness of the "one big day" type of professional learning event. Discussions at regional meetings and the reports from boards and regions stressed the value of site-based professional learning in which teams of teachers study student data and student products together and plan effective interventions. Here are the responses from a small group presentation made at a regional meeting.

- There must be dedicated learning teams at every level all the way up to the regional level.
- What is the <u>focus</u> for capacity building? Each school has a set of screening evidence, class profiles, etc. There has to be something focussed to talk about.
- Teachers need to feel empowered by learning about the "why?" They need to evaluate if what they did worked and its effect.
- It is important to have protected learning communities.
- There is a need for clear goals and steps and processes.
- There must be an environment of trust in which teachers can say they aren't sure where to go next.

- The learning network must include access to expert teachers, speech-language pathologists and psychologists to support the appropriate language, cognition and behaviour steps.
- The networks can evaluate change in practice if the group is able to develop a toolbox of effective strategies and resources—i.e., pre- and post-screening evidence.
  Meeting Notes: Small group presentation of recommendations. Ottawa Regional Meeting. Napanee. March 26 2010. pp. 5-6

The level of detail about site-based learning for teachers that was shared in CODE project meetings is demonstrated in the following accounts of presentations made at regional meetings.

- "SERTs and JK-K classroom teachers worked together to gain a better understanding of child development. Grade 1 teachers were also added to the focus group. We recognized that there are five year olds in Grade 1 and these teachers needed to be included. There was collaboration between curriculum and special education. Speech-language pathologists and consultants were included in the focus group….Instructional strategies designed to be appropriate for different developmental levels were aligned with assessment strategies. The strategies were organized in an electronic tracker. We see the tracker as a work in progress to be 'tweaked' by the focus group."
  Meeting Notes: Board representative making a presentation. Toronto and Area Regional Meeting. Mississauga. April 20 2010. p. 3

- "[Name], speech-language pathologist, described the ways in which the SLPs are heavily involved in providing professional learning for teachers, especially regarding phonological awareness and oral language. SLPs modeled the 'read aloud' process, focusing on phonological awareness—e.g., first reading the selection right through, then picking out a few phonics tasks based directly on whole class needs. [Name] demonstrated ways to add a kinesthetic element to the lessons—e.g., segmenting syllables by patting the child's wrist, elbow, shoulder, head….Then, in a tiered approach, the SLPS modeled the way to move from whole class to small groupings, using the same text. They also developed a chart to address any level of the hierarchy of oral language learning and choose appropriate texts and tasks. Lesson plans were developed."
  Meeting Notes: Presentation by a speech-language pathologist. Barrie Regional Meeting. Newmarket. April 28 2010. p. 5

d) **Adapting Commercial and Board-Developed Tools**

There were comments about teachers questioning the value of collecting assessment data that do not directly inform classroom interventions. There were also frequent reports about teachers adapting some aspects of both commercial and board-developed assessment and intervention tools to make them more useful.

This readiness to adapt established tools and practices indicates that teachers have increased confidence in their own classroom observations and a professional sense of empowerment.

- "[The presenter] reported that teachers often complain about commercial assessment materials, that the questions are not rich enough—i.e., are not Level 4 questions. The board has upgraded several commercial resources to try to promote higher levels of thinking. [The presenter] stated that teachers are more supportive of the materials if they have a role in adapting them."

Meeting Notes: Presentation by a system curriculum lead teacher. Barrie Regional Meeting. Newmarket. April 28 2010. p. 2

- "Boards are constantly changing and adapting their board-developed assessment tools. The evidence that made boards support a particular tool was if they could see that students were progressing and saw that expected results were achieved—also if the number of 'flagged' students diminished."
  Lead Superintendent, French Language Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 30 2010.

- "The PLAB (Primary Literacy Battery) is a collection of literacy assessments from various sources that we put together in our board. It is very effective. We are modifying it a little to be applicable to JK. We did a lot of research for PLAB—it is based on the work of Marie Clay and Crévola. We listened to what our teachers were saying about struggling readers in grade 2 and that it wasn't effective to use the same assessments as grade 1. We added a higher level assessment tool for grade 2."
  Curriculum Administrator, North Bay/Sudbury Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 29 2010.

e) **Curriculum and Special Education**

The experience of the French Language boards provided one important indicator of the progress that was made in creating a new connection between program and special education departments as a result of the CODE project. Note the progression among the three following statements in the French Language Final Report:

- « Il y a eu question tant au niveau provincial que régional à voir à quel secteur revenait la responsabilité de la gestion du projet au niveau des conseils. Est-ce la responsabilité du secteur EED ou programmation ? Ceci a provoqué des retards dans la mise en œuvre du projet. »

- « Une rencontre régionale de deux jours a eu lieu en avril 2010 afin de partager, discuter des informations recueillies lors des projets réalisés dans chaque conseil et de faire des recommandations. À cette rencontre se retrouvait des intervenants à différents niveaux dans les conseils, soit des enseignantes, des conseillères pédagogiques en petite enfance, en enfance en difficulté et en programmation, des directions de services en enfance en difficulté, des agents de supervision responsables du dossier en enfance en difficulté et en programmation ainsi qu'un représentant du MÉO. »

- « Le réseau a permis un rapprochement des intervenants en programmation et en EED au niveau provincial. Ceci aura une contribution positive sur les rencontres provinciales communes entre les regroupements francophones en programmation et EED qui débuteront en automne 2010. »
  Rapport final des conseils francophones du Projet d'évaluation et d'intervention du CODE mat-1[re]. Juin 2010. p. 3-5

There were many reports all across Ontario about the new collaboration between the two departments and plans to continue with joint work as a result of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project.

f) **Multidisciplinary Focus**

The multidisciplinary aspect of CODE projects was highlighted repeatedly. Note the following comments about this focus at the school, board, and regional levels.

- "Teachers need to be able to come to the table with concerns about specific students. Then you look at the data, discuss it, and engage in teacher moderation to dissect the information. Teachers need support with follow-up to data collection. Consultants and facilitators need to make ourselves available to teachers."
Special Education Facilitator, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

- "When I was conducting interviews about the CODE project in each board in the region, it was almost always a multi-disciplinary team that was reflecting on current practice and sharing their tools and strategies."
Consultant to the London Region RSEC: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

- "We had speech-language pathologists, coordinators, superintendents, special assignment teachers, principals, resource teachers, consultants, and a psychologist in our regional meetings. I would challenge anyone coming in from outside without knowing the people ahead of time to listen to the dialogue and then identify people by their roles."
Lead Superintendent, Ottawa Region: interview with the project evaluator, June 17 2010.

IMPLICATIONS: STUDENT, SYSTEM AND PARENT OUTCOMES

The "Overview Findings and Lessons Learned" collected in this evaluation report—and the implications of those findings—confirm and support the recommendations included in the final CODE report: *2009-2010 CODE Special Education Project: JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies.*

The implications set out here and the recommendations in the final CODE report are based on the experiences and research of educators across Ontario. Finding conclusive evidence for these findings creates the same difficulties as is often cited in educational research, that the studies "...do not allow appropriate post intervention differences to be attributed unambiguously to the intervention". Classroom instruction is complex and dynamic and it is frequently the case that "...the intervention is confounded with other important factors that could be the source of any observed effects." [National Institute for Literacy. (2008). p. xii]

All of the findings from the CODE Special Education Project JK-Grade 1 demonstrate the importance of having educators trust their own knowledge and experience. At the same time, there is a real need to enhance professional learning about classroom research.

School Level Implications

1. **Conducting Further Classroom Research**

The CODE Special Education JK-Grade 1 project has underlined the need for more research about early learning and the precursors to reading and writing skills. Other literature reviews and syntheses related to early development have stressed this point.

> In this review, the authors have summarized the findings of research into reading development and instruction in four areas...The research gaps identified point to the need for a strategic, targeted, and coordinated research agenda that will build on existing knowledge and inform policy and practice more precisely and specifically for the Canadian context.
> Canadian Education Statistics Council. (2009). p. 46

> The meta-analyses conducted by the panel showed that a wide range of interventions had a positive impact on children's early literacy learning. However, these positive results were due to the nature and intensity of the instructional activities examined in the studies. There is now a clear need for translational research....Few interpretable studies evaluated the effects of merely providing a literacy-rich or language-rich classroom environment.
> National Institute for Literacy. (2008). pp. xi-xii

The complexity of providing causally interpretable evidence has not and should not prevent those who work with JK-Grade 1 children from drawing upon their own knowledge and experience to conduct systematic classroom inquiry. Voices from the schools are extremely important in educational research.

> Using data does not have to be a mechanical or technical process that denigrates educators' intuition, teaching philosophy, and personal experience. In fact, using data wisely is a human thinking activity that draws on personal views but also on capturing and organizing ideas in some systematic way, turning the information into meaningful actions and making the interpretation public and transparent.
> Lorna M. Earl and Steven Katz. (2006). p. 14

> Educational performance data deserve intelligent interpretation. Indeed, sustainable improvement depends on it. ...and when teachers have the professional discretion to use data to justify trying innovative approaches without anxiety and intimidation, then data can play a powerful role in improving learning and increasing achievement.
> Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley. (2009). p. 39

2. **Implementing "Essential for Some; Good for All"**

The motto, "Essential for Some: Good for All" kept emerging during the CODE JK-Grade 1 project. It is a principle of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Educators began to realize that a teaching strategy or pedagogical materials that respond to the special needs of a specific student or group of students can also be useful for *all* students.
Learning for All K-12. Draft. (2009). p. 15

As project participants shared their findings, there were more and more examples of the theory in action. Although no one is suggesting that every strategy or support provided for special circumstances must be extended to all, "Essential for Some; Good for All" is such a powerful concept that there are important reasons to continue to extend this philosophy and practice across Ontario.

- "More specifically, the project supported research findings that...Kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms with sound field systems showed improvement in attention, behaviour, speech understanding, academic outcomes, teacher vocal health and reading outcomes."
  Final Report. Toronto and Area Region. Description of a Peel District School Board project. May 2010. p. 18

- "The Autism Spectrum Disorders project enhanced the transition process into schools for students with special needs. We used that process as a basis for the entry process into schools for all JK children."
  Consultant to the London Region RSEC: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

- "Meeting participants agreed that educators do not pay enough attention to the classroom environment—i.e., to changing the environment to change learning. There were suggestions such as providing visual reminders for steps in a task; darkening the desktop before placing white paper on it to help children with attention problems focus on print. A key point is that these adaptations can be useful for all children."
  Meeting Notes: Barrie Regional Meeting. Newmarket. April 28 2010. p. 5

- "How can we support teachers in understanding the incremental thought processes and metacognition that happens for children as they develop oral language? There are big gains in having speech-language pathologists right in the classroom, modelling and coaching, to build this understanding."
  Lead superintendent, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator. June 18 2010.

- "Our region had strong recommendations about the need for sensitivity in working with aboriginal populations. We realize that the same practices are important in working with all parents. It is essential to establish a trusting relationship first, and to listen to parents before engaging them in discussion about student needs. We have seen positive results from setting the context first."
  Lead superintendent, Thunder Bay Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 15 2010.

- "In our board, we brought in non-OFIP [Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership] schools to share the learning."
  Meeting Notes: Comment by superintendent. Ottawa Regional Meeting. Napanee. March 26 2010. p. 6

3. **Creating a Multidisciplinary Context**

The big picture that summarizes almost all of the examples of "Essential for Some; Good for All" is the need to have special education and curriculum departments at all levels working together. As the CODE JK-Grade 1 project has demonstrated in many board and regional initiatives, whenever there is a question about effective interventions, the first place to seek assistance is from special education.

Effective tier 1 classroom instruction needs to include a variety of strategies that support different ways of learning and that have proven to be effective for students with special learning needs. This practice can prevent or lessen the need for further tiered approaches or formal identification for special education programs.

- "There was a great deal of support for a focus on aligning the work of special education and curriculum departments, with members providing some examples of effective practice. Several members spoke of the 'tiers of intervention' model as a way of coordinating this collaborative work."
  Meeting Notes: North Bay/Sudbury Regional Meeting. Sudbury. May 10 2010. p. 2

4. **Using Assessment to Inform Intervention**

There was strong consensus that next steps involve providing more support for educators in knowing which intervention to use to address a particular student need.

> Although accountability trends explain why more data are available in schools, the question of what to do with the data remains primarily unanswered. Data provide a way to assess what students are learning and the extent to which students are making progress toward goals. However, making sense of data requires concepts, theories, and interpretative frames of reference.
> Laura Hamilton et al. (2009). U.S. Department of Education. p. 5 [3]

Final reports, discussions at CODE project meetings, and interview responses demonstrated the need to promote what Lorna Earl and Steven Katz refer to as "a shift from calculation to interpretation". Collecting data is no longer enough. System leaders want to know how to support teachers in "experimenting and learning from actual data" and using data "to uncover patterns and to generate hypotheses." [Lorna M. Earl and Steven Katz. (2006). p. 5]

- « On remarque qu'il y a des outils et des processus en place mais on questionne leur mise en œuvre. On souligne l'importance de suivis et on réfléchit sur les stratégies à privilégier pour accompagner les intervenants à tous les niveaux dans leur rôle au sein de la mise en œuvre des stratégies d'évaluation et d'intervention de la maternelle à la 1[re] année.»
  Rapport final des conseils francophones du Projet d'évaluation et d'intervention du CODE mat-1[re]. Juin 2010, p. 4

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[3] This resource can be found on the What Works Clearinghouse website. The site was recommended to the evaluator by Arkadi Toritsyn . http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc

- "The first gap was providing sufficient job-embedded training to teachers and assuring that they would work collaboratively with special education personnel to provide a variety of levels of intervention. This is an area where we believe a model must be created."
  Final Report. North Bay/Sudbury Region. May 2010. p. 3

Classroom teachers need support from the special education staff in knowing how to interpret data, develop hypotheses about the most effective interventions, implement the interventions, and collect new data about the results of these interventions.

5. **Supporting Oral Language Learning**

There was an identified need across the province to support teachers in building capacity to teach oral language as the foundation of literacy and learning. There was much discussion of the need for better, more precise, ways to assess it—and even more urgently, to align effective interventions with that data.

> Using a tiered approach to literacy instruction across the four cornerstones [words, sentences, paragraphs, social communication] provides a mechanism for the infusion of practices that are responsive to the strengths and needs of all learners. Integral to this process is the building of teacher capacity to think about and embed sound assessment and instructional practices to address the personal learning strengths and needs of each student, including those that are most vulnerable. The ability to mindfully plan for instructional practices that are matched to the individual learning styles of children requires us to reflect on the instructional starting points for all learners.
> Final Report. Barrie Region. *Continuing the Journey of Transformation: Special Education in Ontario.* May 2010. p. 7

6. **Promoting Parent Engagement**

Region and board reports list a number of activities that provide for communication and sharing of information with parents. However, there were frequent statements during the CODE project that more work needs to be done. Boards recognize that they need to find new and creative ways to engage parents at a deeper level. There were reports of "gaps" in this area and many recommendations for improving parent engagement.

- "The second gap was presenting assessment findings to parents in a consistent way across each district and ensuring that parents were involved in understanding the goals of the intervention process. Our districts must continue to 'energize' all of the education partners."
  Final Report. North Bay/Sudbury Region. May 2010. p. 3.

- "We had many recommendations about parent engagement. We had more sharing of materials about parent engagement than on any other topic. We want to ensure face-to-face connections for parents and community partners. Some boards had particular individuals who had a role in liaison. We shared entry packages and made recommendations. We discussed a regular cycle of presentations to introduce children and families to schools. A variety of different approaches is needed to fit different communities."

System Principal Learning Support Services, Ottawa Region: interview with the project evaluator on July 5.

Some responses from the telephone interviews include:

- "The school entry intake instrument must have a strong parent component. It is important to remember that no one 'owns' the learning."
- "We need to find ways to help parents help their children to reach their full potential."
- "Parents need to be involved in the development of language skills at home, regardless of the first language a child speaks."
- "The more parents know about school practices, the better. Parents need to have information, to be supported in understanding it and in knowing their role."
- "We need to involve local community agencies and partners in school entry procedures."
- "We can make better connections with agencies—settlement agencies, ELL (English Language Learner) support."
- "We need better transitions for students and parents at all points of the system."
- "We need to work in an inter-Ministry approach at the local level."

Entry and transition processes need to be enhanced to provide more active parent engagement. There must be a new emphasis on professional learning in multiple communities with parents and community partners.

Board Level Implications:

1. **Supporting Ongoing Review of Tools and Strategies**

The CODE project produced examples of increasing precision about assessment tools and strategies. The "Overview Findings and Lessons Learned" review includes reports of teachers adapting commercial and board-developed assessment tools and practices in an attempt to provide more highly developed and useful information to guide instructional decision-making.

Boards need to create a climate that encourages teachers to question and revise board-mandated assessment tools and strategies. This climate can be fostered by:

- acknowledging teacher input and suggestions;
- setting up a cyclical review process for all mandated assessments; and
- supporting classroom research projects which promote questioning and revision of established tools and practices.

2. **Improving Monitoring Practices**

There were many deep discussions across the province about monitoring, what it means, and about the most effective ways to do it. This was an area of board improvement that was frequently mentioned as an area for growth.

- "Monitoring is difficult. Most boards put in programs and policies about assessment tools and timelines. However, a few boards said we thought all that was in place, but we looked in schools and it is not really happening. We were asking how we could better monitor."
  Lead Superintendent, French Language Boards: interview with the evaluator on June 30 2010.

- "The question about effective ways to support leaders in monitoring assessment and intervention was the one that people struggled with most in our region and for which they brought the fewest artefacts to the table. ...The real answer is to ensure accountability at the school level through the *School Effectiveness Framework*—and link work on this self-assessment tool to the school and board improvement plans. We need to build in monitoring strategies to achieve SMART goals. If schools are completing final school reports about achievement of goals, they have to speak to the results of assessment and intervention."
  Lead Superintendent, Ottawa Region: interview with the evaluator on June 17 2010.

3. **Providing Electronic Data**

The need for ongoing tracking of the impact of different interventions over time was referenced frequently. There were comments that the use of electronic data would support this kind of tracking and the sharing of data about assessment and interventions. Also, having electronic data was often mentioned as a support for the monitoring of effective practices.

- "We have an electronic data collection system and input data regularly using the PLAB (Primary Literacy Assessment Battery) that we developed in this board. Teachers, principals and S.O.s can all see the data and this supports monitoring three times a year. The data is colour-coded according to the needs of students. We have student and class profiles and you can see a student's history. We would also like to be able to follow groups of students over time—for example, to target a group of students at Level 2 and track the intervention strategies and their success over time."
  Curriculum Administrator, North Bay/Sudbury Region: interview with the project evaluator, June 29 2010.

- "An electronic tracker for JK and SK is an effective way to monitor strategies. This was our CODE project, to develop the same type of tracking for kindergarten as is used in grades 1-8 across the board."
  Special Education Consultant, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 29 2010.

- "One main limitation in assessment and intervention practices is the lack of effective electronic data gathering. Boards are struggling with getting the data organized in proper report form...There are some issues about protection of privacy, but the problem is more about the technology and the different platforms. The lack of electronic data and templates makes it more difficult and time-consuming to develop student and class profiles. In boards where teachers have access to well-organized electronic data and see the usefulness of it, there is great support for electronic data gathering."
  Consultant to the London Regional Special Education Council: interview with the project evaluator on June 25 2010.

- "We had a lot of conversations in our region about the use of electronic instruments for the collection of data. Electronic data helps leaders monitor assessment and intervention if this information is

available to teachers and support staff and to teachers of the students in later years. An electronic warehouse would be very useful, including information from pre-school assessments like the Nipissing. Information from community partners, the 18 month well-baby data—could all become a part of the data."
Lead Superintendent, Toronto and Area Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

All of the comments about an increased interest in monitoring and electronic data collection demonstrate support for transparency and peer interaction.

> "....there is no way that continuous improvement can occur without constant transparency fuelled by good data. ...When transparency is consistently evident, it creates an aura of 'positive pressure'—pressure that is experienced as fair and reasonable, pressure that is actionable in that it points to solutions, and pressure that ultimately is inescapable."
> Michael Fullan. (2008). p.14

4. **Building Multidisciplinary Capacity**

All of the recommendations about professional learning that were brought forward during the CODE project emphasized the importance of site-based, collaborative learning in schools. Boards have a key leadership role in creating the environment and providing the resources for that learning.

- "This region really recommends that teachers and administrators work in PLCs, and with at-the-elbow coaching—looking at the situation in the class in front of you right now. It is important to say, though, that this in-school, on-site learning still needs to have leadership to get people together and make things work. The PLCs must be supported and that support is vital."
Kindergarten Resource Teacher, Thunder Bay Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 16 2010.

The board has an important role in building capacity by supporting district-level inquiry about key aspects of classroom instruction; e.g., the tasks children are asked to perform.

- "[The presenter] described an exercise in which teachers wrote different oral language activities on 'stickies' and organized them into categories. Most of the activities were receptive—e.g., responding to a set question about a reading text—and there was a real lack of oral language tasks which required open-ended, rich conversation such as might occur at the sand table or drama centre, with guidance from a teacher. Michelle Forge [CODE project co-chair] commented on the importance of assessing the learning environment, not just the student."
Meeting Notes: Presentation by a system curriculum lead teacher. Barrie Regional Meeting. Newmarket. April 28 2010. p. 2

A key aspect of site-based professional learning that has been highlighted many times in this evaluation report is the need to enhance the collaboration between special education and curriculum departments and to promote multidisciplinary approaches in schools and districts.

- "[A superintendent] summarized, 'Part of board implementation of the new JK-SK program will be measurement of the degree of collaborative and inclusive service.'"
  Meeting Notes: Meeting with Lead Boards. February 25 2010. p. 8

- "The main way to build teaching capacity would be to provide embedded professional learning. Also, a multi-disciplinary approach is very important. Collaboration between speech-language pathologists and community professionals and paraprofessionals—child and youth worker, etc.—is very effective. This helps teachers build student profiles on different levels."
  Lead Superintendent, London Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

School boards need to provide differentiated, multidisciplinary support to schools.

Regional Level Implications:

1. **Continuing Regional Collaboration**

As was referenced in reports and interview responses, participants in the CODE JK-Grade 1 project want to continue to work together at the regional level.

2. **Conducting Joint Research**

The CODE project fostered a new interest in conducting joint research at the regional level.

- "[A superintendent] stated that the region can list some ongoing projects that involve research, but that much more could be accomplished in a second year. With more time, the region could provide evidence-based tools to support the key components of a monitoring tool."
  Meeting Notes: Meeting with Lead Boards. February 25 2010. p. 3

Provincial Level Implications:

1. **Using CODE Findings to Support the Early Learning Program**

At the final meeting of the representatives of the seven regions at the end of May 2010, the group discussed alignment of the work of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project with the Early Learning Program. Here is the list of issues that were identified:

- This CODE work is relevant to the Ministry re the Early Learning Program
- Need to be proactive re CODE project work and inquiry over the year
- Define who [CODE] report is written for. It needs to go to ELP sector, curriculum and special education
- It will be a position paper with the expectation of a response, and an expectation that the Ministry look at recommendations within a timeline—i.e., within the pilot year
- Still working on *Growing Success* for kindergarten at the Ministry—so these recommendations could inform that work
  Meeting Notes: Final Meeting with Lead Boards. May 19 2010.

Participants in the CODE JK-Grade 1 project are eager to align their work with the implementation of the Early Learning Program and believe that the "lessons learned" across the province will inform the early learning initiative.

2. **Promoting a Multidisciplinary Focus**

It is important for the Ministry of Education to support the focus on joint work between special education and curriculum that was a major recommendation from the CODE JK-Grade 1 project. Project participants stated the need for Ministry invitations to sessions about new programs to include special education staff members. There was also widespread acknowledgment of the need to recognize and support new roles for speech-language pathologists. Two examples are provided here:

- "[Special education consultant] noted that this project made her more aware of the problem that occurs when invitations from the Ministry to roll-outs about new programs specify who should come, and special education is left out of curriculum events."
  Meeting Notes: Meeting with Lead Boards. February 25 2010. p. 5

- "One outcome of the CODE project was a new appreciation and respect for the knowledge and expertise of our speech-language pathologists. We recognized the strengths we have not had the same opportunity to recognize before. It changed the way we looked at them and their roles. I heard this same comment from several regions at the May 18-19 meeting. There was strong respect for the voice of the speech-language pathologists at the regional tables."
  Lead Superintendent, Ottawa Region: interview with the project evaluator, June 17 2010

All of the data collected during the evaluation process emphasizes the need for joint work between curriculum and special education at all four levels: school, board, region and province.

3. **Implementing the Monitoring Framework**

The mid-project introduction of the Early Learning Program changed the focus of the CODE JK-Grade 1 project across the province. The regions are well aware that the extended program will make it even more important to implement effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for JK-Grade 1 students; to build teacher, school and system capacity; enhance leadership networks; and increase parent engagement and community partnerships.

All of the comments and reports in support of the five elements and the use of indicators and reflective questions that were part of the *Collection of Evidence Template* stress the need for a province-wide self-evaluation tool for JK-Grade 1. Regions and boards welcome the introduction of the *JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Monitoring Framework*, and have expectations that it will increase understanding of the multi-faceted nature of early learning issues, promote capacity building at all levels, and support more consistent practice across the province.

SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS OF THE CODE FINDINGS

Student, System and Parent Outcomes

School Level: p. 23

1. conducting further classroom research
2. implementing "Essential for Some; Good for All"
3. creating a multidisciplinary context
4. using assessment to inform intervention
5. supporting oral language learning
6. promoting parent engagement

Board Level: p. 27

1. supporting ongoing review of tools and strategies
2. improving monitoring practices
3. providing electronic data
4. building multidisciplinary capacity

Regional Level: p. 30

1. continuing regional collaboration
2. conducting joint research

Provincial Level:

The CODE Process p. 15

1. continuing the Ministry/CODE partnership
2. continuing Ministry/CODE liaison meetings

Student, System and Parent Outcomes p. 30

1. using CODE findings to support the Early Learning Program
2. promoting a multidisciplinary focus
3. implementing the *JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Monitoring Framework*

THE ROLE OF THE EVALUATOR

In the original project description, the tasks of the evaluator were: "to participate in the development of an assessment tool for school boards to measure implementation of evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK-Grade 1; report on the CODE process used to accomplish the goals of the project; and student, parent and system outcomes as per the goals of the project."

Methodology for Independent Evaluation

a) **Data Sources**

The evaluator used triangulation methodology by collecting evidence from observations of meetings and presentations, including detailed meeting notes; a study of CODE project reports from board, regional and provincial levels; and from structured telephone interviews. The evaluator:

- participated in all CODE meetings and teleconferences with lead board superintendents and Ministry of Education representatives;
- attended regional meetings in person, by teleconference, or conducted an interview with key representatives following the final regional meeting (e.g, the French Language Region) from March to May 2010;
- attended final presentations at the provincial level in May 2010;
- studied all final regional and board reports provided to her by the CODE team;
- conducted telephone interviews with the seven lead board superintendents and with fifteen board representatives to the regional working committees; and
- studied the final CODE project report and recommendations.

b) **The Evaluation Matrix**

The evaluator presented the *Evaluation Matrix for Independent Evaluation* at the September 9, 2009 meeting of the Ministry/CODE Advisory Committee. She described the context for the evaluation matrix: "Lessons Learned" from the CODE Special Education Project (2005-2008) and "Essential Elements" developed by the Ministry/CODE team on July 24, 2009. The Advisory Committee provided input, including detailed suggestions from Arkadi Toritsyn, Senior Policy Advisor, Special Education Policy and Programs Branch, Ministry of Education.

There was further input at the September 22 meeting of the Ministry/CODE Liaison Committee and at the first meeting of the lead boards on September 30. Revisions were made to the *Matrix* as a result. The *Evaluation Matrix* was presented at regional meetings and provided awareness of expectations and indicators of success right at the beginning of the project. [See **Appendix A** for a copy of the *Evaluation Matrix*.]

c) **The Structured Interviews**

The evaluator developed a series of questions related to three major components of the CODE Special Education project: The Monitoring Framework, The CODE Process, and Student, Parent and System Outcomes. The questions were based on the evaluation questions and indicators in the *Evaluation Matrix.* Once again, support and suggestions from Arkadi Toritsyn of the Ministry are acknowledged with gratitude. [See **Appendix C** for a copy of the interview questions, with a few representative responses that are not included in the body of the report.]

The Participatory Evaluator

The role of the "embedded" or participatory evaluator is an interesting one. It changes the traditional concept of evaluation and allows the evaluator to become:

- a "critical friend";
- a facilitator of the process;
- a participant in achieving project outcomes;
- an objective reporter on observed processes and outcomes;
- a voice for project participants, ensuring that their comments are shared;
- a promoter of self-monitoring practices; and
- a presenter of the overview of "lessons learned".

a) **Open Sharing of Information**

Evaluation of the CODE Special Education JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Project was facilitated by the complete openness of the CODE leadership team. The leadership team shared all project information and spoke freely about the successes and challenges of the process. The CODE team was always open to suggestions or questions from the evaluator and was very flexible, seeking the most effective ideas and strategies from any source. Throughout the project the evaluator was always encouraged to provide input—for example:

- assisting with the development of the foundational piece, the *Collection of Evidence Template* with the indicators and guiding questions for the five elements; and
- planning with the CODE leadership team for lead team meetings and presentations.

b) **Documentation of Trends and Outcomes**

The evaluator took detailed notes of all face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, and regional meetings she attended. These notes were valuable at several points during the project to highlight trends, progress and potential gaps for the CODE leadership team. Examples include: the growing depth of reflective self-monitoring occurring at the regional and board levels; the detail of descriptions of effective assessment and intervention practices at regional meetings; the involvement of people from a wide variety of roles from both special education and curriculum departments in the regions and boards; the realization that having specific experience and knowledge about the early years was seen to be more important than titles

during regional discussions; and the gap in effective strategies to foster parent engagement discovered by participants in many regions.

The notes taken over the course of the project trace the way the leadership team made decisions and either maintained or changed direction in response to Ministry initiatives or regional issues. Meeting notes and interview transcripts provide evidence of the CODE team's responsiveness to regional issues or concerns; the team's unswerving trust in regional problem-solving in spite of some initial requests for more direction; and the team's change in focus to address the introduction of the Early Learning Program.

c) **Understanding the Context**

The evaluator shared in discussions with the CODE leadership team to identify strengths, gaps, opportunities and challenges. She was also able to discuss processes and outcomes with lead superintendents and other key participants in the project. Participants across the province were candid in describing the practices in which they took pride and identifying those that needed improvement.

This open, interactive involvement made it possible not only to identify achievements, challenges and trends, but also to understand more fully the complexity of the continually changing and dynamic environments in which all of these people were working.

d) **Supporting Embedded Accountability**

The kind of frank discussion described above does not occur in traditional evaluation in a hierarchical system where the process and success criteria are externally defined, and participants anticipate high-stakes outcomes of the exercise. The CODE JK-Grade 1 project has demonstrated yet again, if more proof were needed, that traditional evaluation is not the most effective control mechanism.

The ongoing opportunity for informal questioning and input throughout a project creates the potential for an evaluator to influence a project in positive ways and reduces the likelihood of the unhelpful outcome of presenting a negative report at the end of a project.

Far more than any action of an evaluator, however, is the power of building accountability right into the culture of the organization, as described by Michael Fullan. He notes:

> ...when you combine purposeful peer interaction, [the principle that] learning is the work, and transparency, strong internal accountability becomes inherently embedded in the culture.
> Michael Fullan, *The Six Secrets of Change.* (2008). p. 124

As the evaluator remarked in a March 3 2010 teleconference between CODE and Ministry project leaders, this project involved having the evaluator evaluate the self-evaluating process. Self-evaluation and monitoring were continuous throughout the project.

One of the great strengths of the CODE project, identified over and over again in informal discussions and during the conduct of the formal interviews, was the self-monitoring in boards and regions across the province.

- "The CODE project promoted self-monitoring. There was heightened awareness of monitoring in the boards in this region. People were examining their own processes as a result of the regional discussions."
  Special Education Consultant, Barrie Region: interview with the project evaluator on June 18 2010.

System leaders across Ontario, with many different roles, were very open to acknowledging the limitations of their own practices, stating that another board's practice in a particular aspect of early learning was more effective, and that they had plans to change as a result of the shared learning.

The quality of the self-monitoring that was demonstrated during the CODE project, as well as the openness to enhanced parent and community involvement, are positive steps in developing a sense of collective responsibility for student, system and parent outcomes.

> Lateral pressures *and* supports will bring discomfort to some and energize and inspire others. We will still need to attend to and integrate both short-term *and* long-term considerations, and sacrifice neither to the other. We must find ways to help our school neighbours in ways that also energize and empower ourselves. At a crucial turning point in global history, we have to make daring and disruptive changes, not incremental adjustments—but without abandoning everything we have valued and achieved in the past. And moment by moment, one issue at a time, we have to learn how to steer clearly from the top while knowing how and when to "let go".
> Andy Hargreaves & Dennis Shirley. (2009). pp. 109-111.

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