

The JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Project: The View from the CODE Team

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*"The skinny is that nothing succeeds like collective capacity."
(Michael Fullan, Motion Leadership, 2010).*

During the 2009–2010 school year, the Council of Directors of Education (CODE), with the financial assistance of the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education, supported regional studies of the development and implementation of effective, evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for all students in Junior Kindergarten through Grade 1.

This JK–Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies project built on the lessons learned from the previous CODE Special Education Project 2005–2009. It provided support to ensure that the knowledge gained during the past four school years continues to generate improved learning for both students and staff in Ontario schools.

The project was designed to identify existing effective, evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies; share these through leadership networks; build teacher/school board capacity to implement them; and develop a monitoring tool to support school boards in the implementation process.

The Ministry/CODE Liaison Committee identified the following student, parent, and system outcomes for the CODE JK–Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Project.

Outcomes for students:

- improved student achievement
- increased student engagement
- early identification and intervention for students that need additional time and support

Outcomes for parents:

- increased opportunity for parent engagement
- increased parent confidence in public education

Outcomes for the system:

- increased capacity to implement effective classroom/school evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK–Grade 1
- improved board capacity to self-assess the implementation of evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK–Grade 1
- enhanced knowledge sharing among boards on effective, evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK–Grade 1

With the assistance of a steering team, a process was designed to support the development of a provincial overview of assessment and intervention strategies which reflects the experience and expertise of Ontario educators.

A lead board for each of the seven regions was chosen in October 2009. The following lead boards were selected: York Region District School Board – Barrie Region; Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board – London Region; Sudbury Catholic District School Board – North Bay/Sudbury Region; Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board – Ottawa Region; Lakehead District School Board – Thunder Bay Region; Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board – Toronto and Area Region; and CSDC des Grandes Rivières, representing Ontario's French Language School Boards. The lead boards were responsible for assembling a working group from all boards in the same region of the province and scheduling regional team meetings.

To initiate the CODE Special Education Project: JK–Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies, CODE team leaders and lead superintendents for each region made presentations at Regional Special Education Council meetings. Every region in the province then made plans to support the project focus on joint work at the regional level by finding ways to engage all boards in dialogue and reflection on current practice.

These regional professional learning communities reflected upon two key questions:

1. What is important to all of us in this region in relation to JK–Grade 1 assessment and intervention?
2. What will we focus on in developing our suggestions for the JK–Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Framework for the Province?

Boards collected data in response to reflective questions about the five elements in the "Collection of Evidence Template for Lead Boards." These five elements can be found in Appendix A of our report located on the CODE website. This framework was aligned with Ministry goals and with "lessons learned" at the district and school levels during the CODE Special Education Project (2005–2009). The template was intended to support the development of a provincial framework.

Over the course of the school year, the three CODE team leaders participated in regional meetings and/or teleconferences and provided lead superintendents with ongoing support and monitoring for the project. Each region was required to prepare a final submission for the project team of CODE/lead board members focused on effective, evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK–Grade 1. These reports were presented at a provincial meeting attended by lead board superintendents, two additional staff members from each region, and staff from the Ministry's Special Education Policy and Programs Branch. The CODE team then developed an assessment and

intervention framework for use across the province by synthesizing effective strategies and practices identified in the regional reports. This was all drawn together to make up the elements of the CODE Final Report.

The Final Report, the Evaluation Report and an interactive Framework document will be available on the Code website in mid-October. You are encouraged to visit the CODE website, www.ontariodirectors.org, to view and participate in this exciting initiative.

In closing, we would like to thank the staff of the Ministry of Education Special Education Policy and Programs Branch and the school board staff from across the province that participated and informed us of the creative and effective strategies as reported in the CODE JK–Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Framework. We acknowledge that this project would not have been possible without the leadership of our lead boards along with the skill and talent of the many people who have contributed their expertise. CODE is acutely aware that the work is not finished, but that through the concerted efforts of board staff, the conversation and knowledge mobilization under way will enhance our understanding of this very important endeavour. We thank all of those involved for allowing us the opportunity to work together. ●

✉ Comments about this article? Email [John Fauteux](mailto:John.Fauteux@ed.gov.on.ca) or [Michelle Forge](mailto:Michelle.Forge@ed.gov.on.ca)

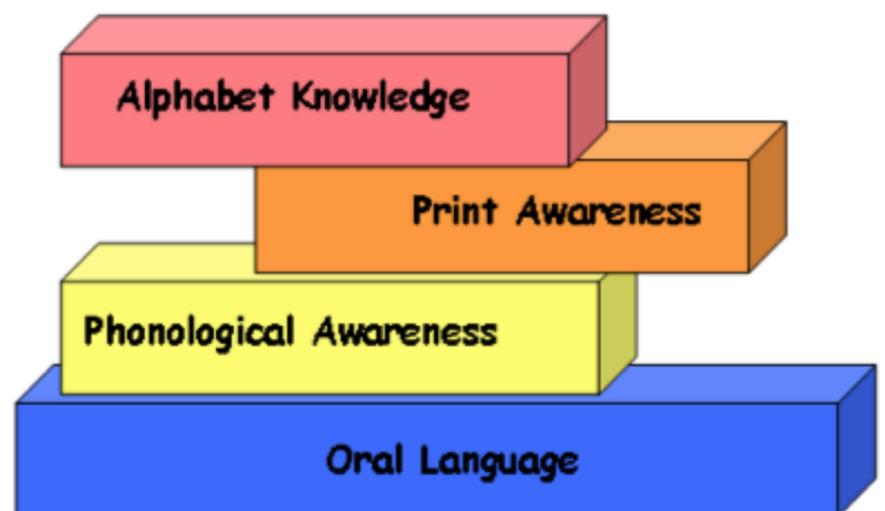
Barrie Region Tackles the Assessment of the Four Cornerstones of Early Literacy Development

Louise Moreau, Superintendent, York Region District School Board

For the CODE JK–Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Project (2009–2010), the Barrie Region boards agreed to work collaboratively to:

- provide leadership and coordination to identify existing effective, evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK–Grade 1 across the Barrie boards;
- determine the area(s) for collective focus;
- investigate extending the work of ACE-ACT group who are currently working collectively (11 Barrie Region boards) on areas of language development with evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students not yet working on JK–Grade 1 curriculum; and
- coordinate and provide to CODE a Barrie Region synopsis of evidence-informed practices to inform a provincial synthesis.

A committee of people representing school boards across the Barrie Region reviewed and gave collective thought to the evidence-informed assessment and intervention practices used within their respective boards. Amongst the committee members, it was agreed that literacy would be the collective focus for the 2009–2010 project.



Reviews of current research indicated that four essential evidence based predictors of success in early literacy development include alphabet knowledge, print awareness, phonological awareness, and oral language (Trehearne 2005). For the purposes of this project, the Barrie board committee reached consensus that these four cornerstones would frame their work together.

Four Cornerstones of Literacy Success

The work of the Barrie Region was based on the understanding that reading and writing are complex processes that require the student to take advantage of a variety of language cues to make sense of the printed word. Therefore, it is important that classrooms provide multiple assessment and instructional opportunities to support the development of alphabet knowledge, print awareness, phonological awareness, and oral language. Classroom activities that intentionally promote a balance of these four cornerstones are needed to support the literacy success of all learners.

Assessment and the Tiered Approach to Intervention

Using a tiered approach (Learning for All, 2009, pp. 23–24; Education For All, 2005, p. 120) to literacy instruction across the four cornerstones 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