

## « Barrie Region, continued

of each student, including those who 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. "Frequent and accurate assessment, evaluation, and progress monitoring by the classroom teacher comprise the engine that drives change in instruction to meet the needs of all students" (Lyon, Fletcher, Fuchs, & Chhabra, in *Education for All*, 2005, p. 60). Although necessary, assessment is not sufficient on its own. By aligning and adjusting strategies and resources according to assessment results, instructional approaches become sustainable, effective, and differentiated (Learning for All, 2009, p. 19).

Armed with these shared beliefs and understandings, the Barrie Region CODE group compiled a range of assessment tools that support the four cornerstones of early literacy and guide our instruction to meet the needs of each learner. Tools were captured to reflect emergent literacy skills for both commercially developed and locally developed assessments, including many locally developed or adapted assessment tools. Through facilitated discussions, it was determined that school boards use a "tiered approach" to make sure that appropriate strategies, supports, and interventions are identified and implemented to ensure student success. Within the tiered approach, the importance of a multidisciplinary team was considered vital to providing collaborative opportunities around student observation, data collection, strategies, and interventions.

In all school boards and within the collaborative group, it was decided that when staff engaged in professional learning opportunities in the area of assessment, conversations about the assessment process and capacity building among staff were considered most valuable. Effective program delivery occurred when diagnostic and formative assessment data were correctly interpreted, shared, and used to make decisions about instructional starting points and intervention. Results from assessment tools provided information for the student and teacher to inform and modify the teaching and learning critical pathway.

The compilation of assessment tools along with the strategies and interventions that were discussed was shared among all of the boards. Given the limited amount of time allocated for the project, it was agreed that the discussion has only just begun and that there continues to be a considerable amount of sharing of best practices to be done. To quote one participant, "I'm trying to figure out how we can continue to support this kind of work. This collaboration is so important. Historically, the CODE projects have only been about the work in one district. This year, we had the opportunity to collaborate and think at a regional level and that has allowed so much growth." Another participant stated that, "We need to create sustainability of the collaboration and communication between boards. The richness of conversation is invaluable and the connections that we have made outside of the project work need to continue." ●



### References

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *Education for all: The report of the expert panel on literacy and numeracy instruction for students with special education needs, kindergarten to grade 6*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer. <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning for all K-12: Draft*. Retrieved from <http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/>

Trehearne, M. P., Hemming Healy, L., & Cantalini-Williams, M. (2005). *Comprehensive literacy resource for preschool teachers*. Vernon Hills, IL: ETA Cuisenaire.

Comments about this article? Email [Louise Moreau](mailto:Louise.Moreau)

## Une approche gagnante: la concertation des conseils scolaires dans un projet!

Liliane Laforest, CODE Team Member

Comment décrire le succès du projet des pratiques d'évaluation et d'intervention maternelle-1re année si ce n'est de reconnaître la grande valeur et les résultats tangibles des échanges professionnels entretenus par le personnel des conseils scolaires francophones. Le processus établi, par les sept surintendants de conseils scolaires, les représentants du Ministère et l'équipe de leadership du CODE, a privilégié une démarche réflexive parmi des surintendants, des directions de services et d'école, des conseillers pédagogiques et des enseignants tant aux niveaux provincial, qu'au régional et au local. Ils ont mobilisé leurs connaissances en portant un regard critique sur leurs pratiques d'évaluation et d'intervention et sur la mise en œuvre au niveau du conseil, de l'école et de la salle de classe.

CODE a privilégié un processus qui a suscité l'engagement des conseils en reconnaissant le leadership du surintendant, comme personne-clé, pour mener les discussions à tous les niveaux de son conseil, mais aussi pour profiter d'un échange professionnel avec ses pairs des autres conseils. C'est ainsi qu'ils ont pu entretenir un dialogue efficace entre plusieurs groupes de personnes pour recueillir de multiples informations sur les approches, les pratiques et les ressources dans la majorité des conseils en province.

Les résultats, de cette cueillette d'information et des discussions, se traduisent en un cadre conceptuel provincial de monitoring qui permet d'évaluer les stratégies d'évaluation et d'intervention ainsi que le processus de mise en œuvre au niveau du conseil. Le personnel des conseils a partagé de nombreuses pratiques efficaces, avec preuves à l'appui qui démontrent comment les pratiques d'enseignement contribuent à améliorer le rendement des élèves.

Depuis plus de vingt ans, les conseils de langue française ont mis en place des programmes de maternelle et de jardin d'enfants. Chaque conseil établit ses politiques, sa gestion et ses programmes développés par des équipes d'enseignants ayant une vaste expérience. Afin d'assurer une haute qualité de programmes et de services dans le conseil, une évaluation continue permet de connaître les points forts ainsi que les améliorations à apporter. Peu d'outils sont disponibles pour faire une évaluation aussi complète selon le processus d'une communauté d'apprentissage professionnelle. Les rencontres professionnelles ont suscité des discussions ouvertes sur la valeur et l'efficacité des outils, des stratégies et des pratiques utilisés. Plusieurs éléments et indicateurs qui peuvent servir à l'élaboration d'un plan d'amélioration de l'école et du conseil, ont été retenus comme étant pertinents. Tous les renseignements compilés par les conseils francophones participants ont servi à l'élaboration de cet outil. Les conseils pourront s'en servir pour réfléchir à leurs pratiques et les évaluer en plus d'acquérir des informations sur diverses approches et des ressources.



De nombreuses réalisations clés sont partagées dans un rapport provincial, accessible au site web du CODE. Il rapporte les retombées favorables sur plusieurs aspects tels la croissance professionnelle des participants, le rapprochement des responsables des secteurs de la programmation et de l'enfance en difficulté pour travailler vers un même objectif tant au niveau du conseil qu'au niveau régional et provincial. Une banque de ressources permet aussi aux conseils d'aller puiser des outils et des programmes qui peuvent les aider. Lors de la rencontre provinciale, des constats importants furent relevés selon les cinq éléments étudiés et un besoin de poursuivre ce dialogue dans un forum de communauté d'apprentissage provincial est proposé. Parmi les leçons apprises, nous reconnaissons l'importance d'utiliser un processus et un outil qui permettent tant de reconnaître les points forts de nos pratiques en identifiant ce qui nécessite des améliorations. L'engagement de toutes les personnes qui cherchent à rehausser l'enseignement est primordial dans une telle approche.

Le travail, réalisé grâce à l'implication d'un très grand nombre de personnes dans plusieurs conseils, a eu des retombées dans chacun des conseils, mais aussi tous les conseils francophones de la province peuvent en bénéficier. Mettre les connaissances de chacun à profit de tous est une formule gagnante! ●

Le travail, réalisé grâce à l'implication d'un très grand nombre de personnes dans plusieurs conseils, a eu des retombées dans chacun des conseils, mais aussi tous les conseils francophones de la province peuvent en bénéficier. Mettre les connaissances de chacun à profit de tous est une formule gagnante! ●

Comments about this article? Email [Liliane Laforest](mailto:Liliane.Laforest) or [Nicole Gaudet](mailto:Nicole.Gaudet)

## Regional Special Education Council (RSEC)–London Regional Office JK–Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Project

Vicki Corcoran, Superintendent, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

### Overview/Context:

The Regional Special Education Council from the school boards and school authorities in the London region has a history of working collaboratively to share resources, expertise, and data. Through a logic model exercise conducted in 2007 with facilitation from Ministry of Education personnel, the London Regional Special Education Council

To enable students with special needs to achieve their full potential through the provision of special education programs and services.

established the following goal:

The participating boards and school authorities have shared resources, information, and expertise as part of that professional learning opportunity, and have developed tools for the sharing of information and the gathering of regional data as we work towards this regional goal. As one aspect of this, the region has for the past several years used a web-based survey tool to gather regional data on assessments and Individual Education Plan processes. The various participants have used the information to inform their own practice in their individual boards.

### What We Did:

In 2009–10, several of the boards in the region took on Lead Board responsibilities for various projects, such as: JK–1 CODE Project; ASD – Phase 2 Connection Project; A4 – Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas; and Learning for All K–12. At the November 2009 RSEC meeting, it was agreed that data would be collected and shared among all parties with regard to all of these projects, and that the data and information would be gathered using a similar format and with similar mechanisms. Each participant completed an agreed-upon set of questions specific to the particular project. In a follow-up to the collected data, a meeting with each of the boards was held to verify the information and to identify resources being developed that would be shared regionally.

In order to facilitate the collection of the data, a recently retired RSEC member was employed to collect and collate the data and to present updates and findings at the regional RSEC meetings.

## « London Regional Office, continued

### What We Learned:

In the initial data gathering process, boards were asked to comment on specific areas of each project with regard to their stage of implementation. In relation to the JK-1 CODE project specifically, boards responded to the categories of capacity building, collaboration, measuring progress, informing parents, and the collection and use of data to inform practice.



Overall, boards reported being in the implementation stage with regard to the specific areas delineated in the survey. Boards were implementing job-embedded learning opportunities for staff and focusing on the use of evidence-informed assessments to improve student learning. All boards reported to be at the sustaining stage for clear and collaborative process for entry into school and collaboration with

community partners. In the area of student and class profiles, however, boards generally reported that they were at the preparation and initiation stages, although the majority indicated that there were planned, precise, and intensive assessments and interventions for some students, along with parent and family involvement. Data from regulated health professions and/or external agencies was being used to inform programming for students entering the school system.

During the second phase of the project, face-to-face meetings were held at each board. The key components of effective practices were identified in several areas:

**Assessment Methods:** Boards identified the connection to the School Effectiveness Framework process as a key component to successful practices in the JK-1 area. The collaborative involvement of other professionals, such as speech/language pathologists, psychologists, special education consultants/coordinators, and community professionals during the entry-to-school process was deemed to be essential.

**Standards:** The need for standards and consistency in the delivery of services across all schools in a district allowed for consistent monitoring and the more effective use of data, with guidelines being provided by the board, at the JK-1 and primary levels. The assessment of foundational skills helped staff to know their students and to inform and direct instruction. The results obtained through the gathering and analysis of data enable teachers to provide a profile of student growth and development and to develop responsive programs to meet the needs of all learners.

**Training:** Training for staff was seen as most successful when it involved doable tasks—tasks that were manageable and meaningful. Embedded professional development with time to practice was seen as most effective. Early Years staff benefited from training on how data informs teaching, with an emphasis on next steps.

**Communication and Collaboration:** The boards identified the key components of effective communication with families as being open and honest communication, the minutes of meetings being shared/communicated with next steps identified, the modelling of techniques for parents, the sharing of information in a variety of formats, and explanations of terms/programs/procedures. The need for an open and inviting atmosphere was also highlighted.

Partnership agreements and established protocols were seen as effective strategies for working collaboratively with community partners. Open and clear communication processes, and the timely sharing of reports and information, were seen as key components to good working relationships. Some boards identified the use of problem-solving community planning tables as an effective process.

**Support:** In order to establish effective intervention strategies for Early Years students, several key areas of support were identified. System support mechanisms, such as professional learning communities and system in-service on intervention strategies, were valued. Having the JK-1 area identified as an area of focus in school and board improvement plans was also seen as important for highlighting early intervention.



School-based supports mentioned by boards frequently included the need for school-embedded professional development and the support of system resource personnel at the school level. The use of assessment results in a systematic way to inform teacher instruction in order to meet students' needs was again highlighted, along with the need to have an understanding of intervention strategies appropriate to the identified needs.

Classroom supports identified by boards to support the learning of young students included the use of learning profiles, differentiated instruction, the use of high-yield strategies for instruction, and the use of interventions and remediation strategies in the areas of fine motor skills and oral language development.

Boards appreciated the support of funding made available through CODE to help with the costs related to implementation and the duplication of materials.

### Next Steps:

In order to help expedite the sharing of information gathered as a result of the four regional initiatives, a decision was made by the RSEC members to embark on a regional document-sharing project through the development of a regional website.

The website also contains other materials in addition to the information gleaned from the four specific initiative areas. Topics include:

- Alternative program
- Assessment and evaluation
- Assistive technology

- Exceptionalities
- Early learning
- EQAO
- English as a second language
- Individual Education Plans
- Learning for All
- Policies and procedures
- Information shared at RSEC meetings
- Speech and language
- Transitions
- Inclusion
- Literacy
- Mental health and well-being
- Parent resources

Due to the close relationship and spirit of cooperation between the members of RSEC, the member boards and school authorities have generously agreed to share the resources contained within the website to assist each other in the work they do in the field of Special Education. The website will enable them to freely share the resources which until now were developed for internal use within each board. Further, through the sharing of these resources, the members of RSEC believe they will be able to improve the quality of service they provide in meeting the needs of all students. ♦

Comments about this article? Email [Vicki Corcoran](mailto:Vicki.Corcoran)

## CODE Ottawa Regional Junior Kindergarten to Grade One Assessment and Intervention Learning Team 2009–2010

Trish FitzGibbon, Superintendent, Hastings Prince Edward District School Board

Dalin and Rolff (1995) and Katz, Earl, and Jaafar (2009) argue “that the only way schools will survive the future is to have the capacity to deal with change because they have a collective understanding of where they are going, what is important, and how to get there. Sustainability of positive changes in education depends on attention to collective development. Individual learning is no longer sufficient. People at all levels of the system need to learn and different parts of the system must be aligned to provide a coherent and consistent picture and strategy for change.” (Stoll, in press.)



The Ottawa CODE project was all about collective understanding and collective development. We became “knowledge workers” and in the end, through uploading and downloading knowledge, built new knowledge that resulted in significant recommendations which we believe are the next steps in refining our practices to enhance the achievement of our early learners.

The Ottawa Regional Junior Kindergarten to Grade One Assessment and Intervention Learning Team was comprised of personnel from each of the region's school boards and was inclusive of a range of reflective practitioners from curriculum, special education, and specialized services.

The Learning Team met on five occasions for full-day sessions throughout the 2009–2010 school year, with each session hosted by a different school board. A professional learning team approach was implemented, with the group establishing norms and committing to a project plan.

Each session began with a focus on the goals of the project and a review of the previous work accomplished. This was followed by an activity that activated prior knowledge to prepare for the day's discussion and work on the identified assessment of intervention element (e.g., instructional strategies). Through discussion, team members in mixed school board groups brought forward knowledge and evidence-informed practices or resources that demonstrated results within their school system. Each session concluded with the sharing and critiquing of recommendations for consideration in our final report.

An exploration and recommendation template was provided for groups to stimulate discussion, share knowledge and resources, and synthesize their thinking into key recommendations for consideration in the development of a provincial Junior Kindergarten to Grade One Assessment and Intervention framework. This synthesis of thinking was achieved through a process of deliberate debate to reach consensus.

Team members maintained a project binder which successively built upon the work completed in the previous learning team sessions. In addition, an email network was established to inform members of meeting dates and preparation activities.

The professional learning team members agreed to design a report template similar to the Special Education Transformation Working Table Report, 2006, so that the synthesized learning could be captured in a series of next-step recommendations to support the development of the provincial framework. These recommendations would be grounded in current Ministry initiatives, evidence-informed research, and best practices, and would reflect the consensual thinking of the region.

The Ottawa Regional Reflections April 2010 Report was primarily a “process” oriented report. The recommendations for the five elements (system processes and organization; parent involvement and community communication; assessment and use of data; instructional leadership; and professional learning and capacity building) reflected the best practices and thinking of the regional learning team, with future-oriented next steps recommended, so that all boards across the province could consider their current practice