



## York Catholic District School Board

*We are a Catholic Learning Community of collaborative partners, called to serve one another by being committed to and accountable for quality learning by all with Jesus as our inspiration.*

The York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) is one of the fastest growing Boards in Canada with approximately:

- 51,541 students in 83 elementary schools (34,557) and 13 secondary schools (16,984)
- 6,514 students serviced through Special Education

The Board adopted a mainstreaming philosophy in 1988. The YCDSB serves a diverse population with changing demographics.

One of the commitments of the Board is to ensure that assessments are done in a timely manner, with sufficient follow up leading to more successful student outcomes. However, with significant waiting lists, minimal follow up with school staff was possible. It was these issues that were addressed through the Ontario Psychological Assessment Project (OPA).

The (OPA) project occurred over two cycles and involved fifteen schools:

- 10 schools (Cycle 1) - September 2007
- 5 schools added (Cycle 2) - January 2008

The initial objective was to complete assessments. For the duration of the project, 224 assessments were undertaken by psychology, speech and language, and physical/occupational therapy. A focus was to collaboratively implement the recommendations for students who received more than one assessment. The total number of students tracked was 40, ranging from SK to grade 3. The selection of students was based on professional assessments performed and the commonalities listed below. Both the classroom and the special education teachers for the primary division participated in several professional development sessions.

This initiative was approached through a multidisciplinary *Capacity Building Team (CBT)*:

- Consultant (Special Education)
- Occupational Therapist
- Psychologist
- Speech/Language Pathologist

Among the 40 students tracked, several commonalities surfaced, predominantly in areas of:

- reading skills
- oral language
- writing: quality and quantity
- visual motor integration and visual tracking
- academic behaviours (e.g. attentiveness, learning readiness, view of self as a learner, self efficacy)

Figure 1



For each student, the CBT and school staff completed a profile sheet documenting:

- **baseline data** from all sources (formal/informal assessments including professional assessments, teacher observations, work samples, report card, etc.)
- **targeted skills** and corresponding strategies
- **follow up visits** with the purpose of “tweaking” strategies, modeling, coaching, and charting progress

The CBT designed a three tiered model based on Education for All:

- Tier 1 intervention focused on classroom instruction.
- Tier 2 focused on more intensive instruction for those who did not progress satisfactorily in tier 1.
- Tier 3 focused on special education support for those few who did not progress satisfactorily at tier 1 and 2.

The intervention designed offered great flexibility (**see Table 1**).

The tier 2 **Four Part Lesson** (45 minutes) provided *additional* instruction in or out of the classroom or in a small group setting focusing on:

- **reading materials** at their independent and instructional levels
- **direct instruction** of strategies, sight word fluency and phonemic awareness
- **writing** as an integral part of reading instruction
- **monitoring** progress

*“You took all the parts of reading instruction that resonate with us and you’ve put a big red ribbon around it”.*

*(Special Education Teacher)*

With the hindsight of Cycle 1, the teacher development inservice for Cycle 2 was altered in several key aspects:

- direct modeling from Cycle 1 teachers
- full participation of principals and/or vice principals
- increased length of inservice to network and share resources/activities

These alterations made the session particularly successful as indicated by the teacher/principal feedback.

Based on an increasing number of referrals of students “at risk”, school staff requested further inservicing at a tier 1 level. It became evident that a crucial link needed to be forged between curriculum and special education. This resulted in an *integrated, collaborative, multidisciplinary, interdepartmental* approach to inservicing from the planning to the delivery phase. Additional novel facets include:

- a small number of classroom teachers, by *grade*
- modeling of strategies with actual students
- time allotted to debrief and provide the developmental rationale
- materials/resources shared with a few ready for implementation

The feedback was extraordinarily positive offering a needed impetus to strengthen this collaborative approach. This practice resonates with many teachers who, through questionnaires and focus interviews, have concurred that the core classroom instruction (tier 1) must be ever so well informed, differentiated, and systematically delivered so that fewer and fewer children fall through the cracks (see *Figure 1*).


*“Well-researched, balanced, targeted, and practical approach to reading”.*

*(Principal)*

*“It’s improving my grades because I keep practicing and practicing until I get it right”.*

*“I feel happy because I get to learn a lot of things”.*

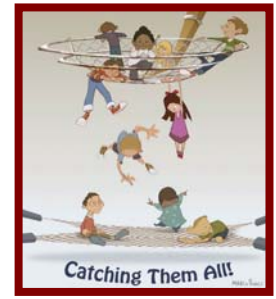
*(Grade 2 Student)*






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# Promising Practices

**TABLE 1:  
A TIERED CONTINUUM OF INSTRUCTIONAL  
& INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR THE  
AT RISK LEARNER**






Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
		
Classroom Instruction	In-class <i>and/or</i> Out-of Class Intervention	Special Education

**OBJECTIVE 1: REDUCE NUMBER OF ASSESSMENTS**

<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ enhanced teacher capacity (see obj. 2)</li> <li>✓ commitment to prevention / early intervention model</li> <li>✓ timely screeners as formative assessments (see Appendix 1)</li> <li>✓ reliance on existing data (e.g., DRA, observations, daily performance) to determine students “at-risk”</li> </ul>	<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ monitoring of student response to intervention</li> <li>✓ integration of informal assessment tools and integration of intervention in the classroom</li> <li>✓ utilization of informal assessment tools/processes and incorporation of existing data</li> </ul>	<p>Of the 40 students tracked, the vast majority made significant progress with only 7 students making minimal gains, despite the intensity of the intervention. These students are considered for tier 3, in which further standardized assessments may be required.</p>
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**OBJECTIVE 2: ENHANCE TEACHER CAPACITY**

<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ collaborative planning &amp; delivery for teacher training in a multidisciplinary &amp; interdepartmental format (Curriculum &amp; Special Education)</li> <li>✓ integration of the Four-Part Lesson into literacy lesson as a whole or in its parts (i.e., a centre approach)</li> <li>✓ in-class modelling and coaching by CBT</li> <li>✓ improved alignment of recommendations in professional assessment reports with classroom practices (i.e., literacy / numeracy instruction)</li> <li>✓ enhanced teacher understanding of recommendations in professional assessments</li> <li>✓ provision of sample materials/resources/websites</li> <li>✓ opportunities for networking &amp; collaboration amongst principals &amp; teachers</li> </ul>	<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ increased <i>intensity</i> of the instruction, specifically:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>time</i>: supplemental 45 minutes</li> <li>▪ <i>frequency</i>: 4 times per week for 12 weeks</li> <li>▪ <i>number</i> of children in group (maximum of 4)</li> <li>▪ <i>quality</i>: explicit and systematic instruction (re-teaching review, supervised practice, prompt and immediate feedback</li> <li>▪ more frequent progress monitoring (bi-weekly) to determine effectiveness (i.e., Curriculum Based Measurement)</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>flexible</b> intervention in that it can be delivered by classroom or special education teachers</li> <li>✓ training for students in grade 3 and up to use computer technology and software to enhance the attainment of literacy goals</li> </ul>	<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ continued use of the revised and improved format of professional assessment reports</li> <li>✓ continued use of evidence-based practices to meet the needs of all learners</li> <li>✓ frequent progress monitoring</li> <li>✓ training for students grade 3 &amp; up to use computer technology &amp; software to enhance the attainment of literacy</li> </ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tier 1</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Classroom Instruction</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tier 2</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>In-class <i>and/or</i> Out-of Class Intervention</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tier 3</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Special Education</b></p>												
<b>OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE LITERACY AND NUMERACY</b>														
<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ systematic &amp; explicit teaching of all components of the lesson</li> <li>✓ ongoing monitoring of progress (Curriculum Based Measurement [CBM])</li> </ul>	<p>Through:</p> <p><b>FOUR PART LESSON</b></p> <p><b>1: Guided Reading (15 min.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5 min. familiar text</li> <li>▪ 10 min. new text</li> </ul> <p><b>2: Sight Word Fluency (5 min.)</b></p> <p><b>3: Phonological Awareness (10 min.)</b></p> <p><b>4: Working with Words (15 min.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ from alphabetic principle / phonics to paragraph writing</li> </ul>	<p><b>STUDENT OUTCOME DATA ANALYSIS SUMMARY FOR CYCLE 1</b></p> <p>n=25 students Grade 1-3 12 week implementation</p> <p><b>All students demonstrated significant improvements by the end of the 12 week implementation cycle.</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>ASSESSMENT TOOL</th> <th>BASELINE</th> <th>POST IMPLEMENTATION (significant improvements for all)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>DRA</td> <td>Levels 1-16</td> <td>Levels 8-30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CBM (NWF &amp; ORF)*</td> <td>"Significantly at risk"</td> <td>"Below average" to "average"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phonological Awareness Screener</td> <td>Well below age / grade level</td> <td>Approaching or at age / grade level</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*NWF: Nonsense Word Fluency *ORF: Oral Reading Fluency</p>	ASSESSMENT TOOL	BASELINE	POST IMPLEMENTATION (significant improvements for all)	DRA	Levels 1-16	Levels 8-30	CBM (NWF & ORF)*	"Significantly at risk"	"Below average" to "average"	Phonological Awareness Screener	Well below age / grade level	Approaching or at age / grade level
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<b>OBJECTIVE 4: SUSTAIN PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS</b>														
<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ improved assessment report</li> <li>✓ building capacity of school-based resource team</li> </ul>	<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ a commitment from special education teachers to continue the Four Part Lesson</li> <li>✓ principal involvement in facilitating the three tiered approach</li> </ul>	<p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ improved assessment report format &amp; recommendations</li> <li>✓ building capacity of school-based resource team</li> </ul>												

**CRITICAL FINDINGS & LESSONS LEARNED**

A number of critical findings emerged from the in-depth feedback generated from various stakeholders. These findings include the need to:

- model the cross-department link of Curriculum and Student Services for:
  - ✓ planning and delivery
  - ✓ moving Differentiated Instruction from a philosophy to a practice
  - ✓ combining/launching common instructional initiatives
- re-examine existing practices within Student Services disciplines with regard to assessment
- provide job embedded learning (coaching and mentoring) for classroom teachers
- intervene using a tiered model of service
- intervene in a systematic, explicit, intense and frequent manner, including monitoring of progress
- re-examine the role of special education teachers in supporting primary students

As a system, our commitment and efforts continue to be directed on implementing these critical findings in our ongoing quest to provide high quality instruction for all.