Lambton Kent District School Board
Student Achievement ✓ Community Success

ONTARIO PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (OPA) STUDENT ASSESSMENT MINISTRY PROJECT

In the spring of 2006, the Ontario government announced funding to school boards to support assessments for students who require special education programs and/or services. This was a component of the early identification and intervention initiatives that support the Ministry of Education's strategic direction. The Ministry had some specific outcomes that it wanted to see as a result of this project. These outcomes centre on the **classroom teacher providing effective instruction based on assessment information.**

Project Objectives:

1. Reduce wait times for students in JK to grade 4 requiring professional assessments.

2. Enhance teacher capacity to provide effective programming for students provided with professional assessments.

3. Improve literacy/numeracy skills for students provided with professional assessments.

4. Sustain assessment process improvements for the long term.

The LKDSB's Student Assessment Project: Helping Teachers Help Students

The Lambton Kent District School Board's OPA project is focused on fostering student success and building teacher capacity with regards to professional assessments. The results of this project will ultimately produce a cognitive shift regarding professional assessments and reducing wait times that will set the standard for how our Board will operate to this regard in the future.
With regards to psychological assessments, a reduction in wait times is being accomplished through the support of hiring additional staff, as well as through earlier average age of intervention, and improved pre-referral screening processes. Teacher capacity is being enhanced through including the Classroom Teacher in the entire assessment process (both pre and post), and making report recommendations that are user friendly and easily translated into practical classroom learning strategies. Our goal is to improve literacy and numeracy skills for students through early intervention and following up with classroom teachers post assessment to ensure the recommendations are understood and effective for the student.

The speech and language portion of the OPA project has focused on decreasing wait times for students needing speech and language assessment for students from SK to Grade 4 with additional staffing providing time for more speech and language assessments. The addition of classroom teacher participation in the discussion of assessment results and increased focus on suggestions for remediation geared to the classroom has helped to enhance teacher capacity and to improve literacy and numeracy skills for students.

Promising Practices:

The most significant promising practice afforded our board as a direct result of the OPA project is engaging the classroom teacher in all steps of the assessment process, including the pre-referral screening process, conferencing of assessment results and follow-up meetings to ensure that recommendations are understood and effective for the student. The inclusion of the classroom teacher has demonstrated empowerment as the front line worker with the students. By collaborating with educators in addressing the needs of students based on assessment information, teachers are finding that they are better equipped to understand the student's needs, implement the recommendations, and to provide effective instruction within the classroom. This promising practice has increased teacher's capacity to use the assessment information effectively in guiding the development of their lesson plans as well as the IEP, and consequently has improved their practice for programming appropriately for students. Classroom teachers have also suggested that student engagement has improved, their self-confidence in delivering programs has improved and that in many situations, has reinforced the strategies they currently use. They have appreciated being an integral part of the process and also being aware of expectations for the student's learning. They are able to incorporate suggestions throughout the entire day and can support parents as they endeavour to implement similar strategies in the home. Formal and informal feedback has been very positive.

In an effort to continue to support the classroom teacher in addition to other board personnel and parents, the Speech and Language and Psychology department staff will offer "Lunch and Learns" and a website will be developed on the staff intranet and LKDSB internet with checklists for early intervention, strategies and activities. Understanding each other, through "speaking the same language" will assist in mobilizing this promising practice across the school board. In addition, board protocol to continue classroom teacher attendance at assessment feedback sessions and continued collaboration among professional disciplines, will serve to ensure sustainability over the long-term.

Currently, staff are offering after school workshops and have developed a variety of resources. The OPA project has enabled us to employ additional staff to support the development of resources to share with classroom teachers and for parents to use at home. Follow up meetings and surveys post conference of assessment results have supported the implementation of strategies and further supported the classroom teacher.