

DECEMBER 2004

Curriculum Update

News and information
for Ontario's Educators

Presented by the Curriculum Implementation Partnership in cooperation with the Ontario Ministry of Education

WHAT'S INSIDE...

With this issue, we launch a new publication design in response to requests from readers who participated in our spring 2004 reader survey. We received a wide variety of suggestions for articles, and you can expect to see the content of Curriculum Update evolve to address your suggestions.

Other features in this issue include educator Steven Reid's exploration of the effective use of data to support teachers and improve student learning; the Expert Panel reports on Grades 4 to 6 mathematics and literacy, which bridge the earlier K-3 and 7-12 reports; information about a new expert panel on special education; the launch of a mentoring pilot program for new teachers; new Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Courses; and a review of software designed to foster independent writing skills by John Palbom.

If you would like to subscribe to Curriculum Update, or have comments or suggestions for future issues, see page 11 for contact and subscription information.

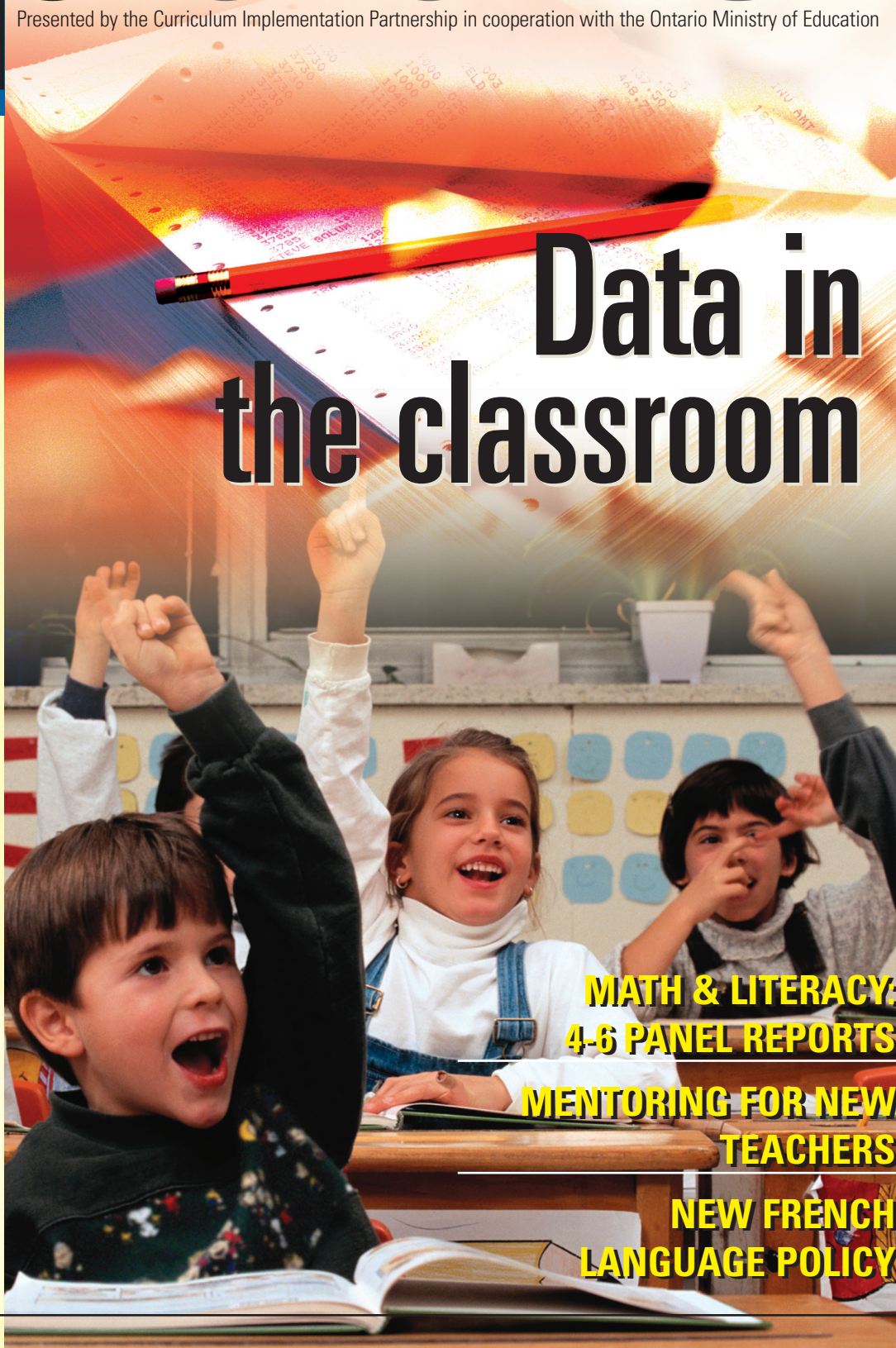
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Data in the classroom

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USING DATA EFFECTIVELY: IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

By Steven Reid • Central Coordinating Principal – Elementary Program • Toronto District School Board

Student, school and board-wide data are invaluable tools for supporting teachers and improving student achievement. In a recent roundtable discussion at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), several teacher leaders gathered to discuss how data was being used successfully to inform practices within the classroom and the school. The stories they shared confirmed my experiences as a principal working with educators to develop professional learning communities and use research and data effectively to support student success.

The following themes surfaced during the discussion:

• CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT •

Effective instruction and assessment are inseparable. Classroom assessment is not time taken away from instruction. It is vital to high student achievement.

When teachers use assessment information they can identify specific student strengths and needs and pinpoint the instructional foci for the class, small groups, and individual students. A teacher's time, therefore, is used more effectively because he or she is able to plan lessons and activities based on the needs of students and use specific strategies to move learners forward. At the TDSB, teachers use a variety of assessment strategies and tools such as running records, portfolios, rubrics, and continuums, to ensure that consistent progress is being made by students, and that instruction in the classroom is targeted to learning needs.

• SCHOOL-WIDE ASSESSMENT •

Schools that promote consistent assessment provide common language and assessment strategies for teachers and support this with targeted professional development and resources.

The Developmental Reading Assessment, for example, is a tool used by TDSB schools in the Early Years Literacy Project (EYLP) to inform classroom instruction and school improvement planning. Data is gathered on a school-wide basis at the beginning and end of the school year. At the classroom level, running records are also performed throughout the year, ensuring that instruction is targeted to the needs of the student. Reading levels are used to identify students at risk and monitor student supports and resource allocations.

What do we do when students are not making progress? Trends in school and project-wide data provide vital information to teachers and principals that can help answer that question. Some schools, for example, observed higher percentages of students reading at grade level each year. On the other hand, for some students, comprehension was below the expected level. Armed with this important information, schools began to focus on promoting specific comprehension skills. Professional learning teams investigated appropriate teacher resources, shared effective practices, and modelled lessons. Teachers began to plan intentional opportunities in the classroom to target visualization, extension of ideas, and self-reflection during lessons and student conferences.

• ASSESSMENT AND SCHOOL CULTURE •

It is important for teachers and principals to work together to ensure that assessment is a part of the culture of the school. In some schools, an assessment-oriented culture is facilitated by ensuring that data is visible in staff meetings and is a regular part of professional dialogue. This behaviour reinforces the belief that assessment data is essential for informing daily instructional practices in the classroom and school improvement planning.

As educators, we are beginning to explore the ways that data can inform our professional development programs, enhance classroom practice and improve the learning experience for our students. As we gain more experience, data gathering and analysis will become part of our everyday conversations and actions.

“
Effective
instruction and
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Steven Reid

USING DATA EFFECTIVELY: FOUR CASE STUDIES

1. Pinpointing instructional needs

Staff at Shoreham Public School and Lawrence Heights Middle School used CASI (Comprehension, Attitudes, Strategies and Interests) tool to identify student needs. Staff reviewed the results of individual students to identify those at risk, as well as the results of each class on particular questions, using class tracking sheets, a database, and Fathom dynamic statistics software. The results revealed several patterns. The application of language convention results was very high, however, students were struggling with the organization of ideas.

Equipped with this information, grade teams were able to plan appropriate programming to improve student learning using the 'Next Steps' section of the CASI Teacher's Guide. Teachers, for example, began to investigate graphic organizers and Venn diagrams to help students identify pertinent information from their readings. Students were encouraged to use this information during various retelling, relating, and reflecting activities. Future assessments confirmed improved student achievement.

2. Refining pathways for students

At École Secondaire de Casselman, Guidance Counsellors Pascal Forget and Paulette Gallerneault were interested in determining how to develop effective pathways that would serve this distinct school population in Eastern Ontario.

They began by collecting three years of data on previous graduates, their academic records, and their post-secondary destinations. Colleges and universities, for example, were contacted in the region to determine which of the school's applied and academic graduates were attending, and the specific programs they had enrolled in. The result was a clear picture of the choices students had made in secondary school, and the post-secondary destinations those courses had prepared them for.

Based on this foundation, Pascal and Paulette began to work with Grade 7 and 8 teachers in the region, gathering student data and conducting a survey to determine students' post-secondary goals, including work placements,

apprenticeship programs, college or university. Appropriate pathways were developed, based on the data and survey results, which suited the specific needs and goals of students. As a result, Grade 9 students are now grouped with like-minded peers, and will remain together throughout their Grade 9 to 12 schooling.

While the program, initiated in 2002-2003, is still in its infancy, Pascal reports that student achievement has risen, and that both teachers and parents have responded positively. Students are more engaged and motivated because they are aware of the direct link between their current learning and the destination that learning is preparing them for and teachers are better able to adapt their teaching to the specific needs of each class.

3. Targeting professional development

Brookhaven Public School teachers used the First Steps Writing Continuum to assess each student's phase of writing. After sorting the results in the school database, it was found that differences in classroom results appeared inconsistent. After reviewing the results with the literacy committee, a refresher on how to place a student and how to determine when a student was ready to move to the next phase of the continuum was provided. Following the professional development, teachers reassessed their students and were better able to identify appropriate teaching strategies for individual students and groups of students. As a result, teachers' time was used more effectively.

4. Supporting student achievement

Teachers at Brookhaven Public School were concerned that a new cohort of students was not as advanced as students in the previous year. After administering a Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) it was discovered that the new cohort was actually reading at a higher level than the previous cohort. Classroom teaching and practice were aligned with the data results. Reading scores continued to improve, resulting in 25% more students reading at grade level in the primary grades.

SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPERT PANEL

A panel of 22 English and French-language educators and researchers, recognized for their expertise and leadership in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics to students with special education learning needs, has been created to advise on current research and recommended practices for improving the effective teaching of reading, writing and mathematics to K-6 special needs students.

The Expert Panel will assess the current research-based knowledge on effective reading, writing and mathematics instruction, and provide practical guidance on a range of classroom practices:

- Use of assessment tools and techniques to establish effective program planning
- Alignment of evidence-based strategies with specific learning profiles
- Effective management of classrooms with diverse learners
- Successful implementation of practices that improve achievement for all students with special education learning needs

The panel is also expected to seek the advice of experts within and outside Ontario regarding practical ways to facilitate and provide relevant professional development for educators. The Expert Panel report is expected in the spring of 2005.



4 – 6 MATH AND LITERACY:

Expert panel reports provide new insights

Reports of the Expert Panels on Grades 4 - 6 mathematics and literacy in Ontario were released in October 2004.

The two panels were created to provide research and experience-based advice on instruction, assessment and intervention practices aimed at improving student achievement in these subjects. The reports provide a bridge between the extensive research and reporting done by earlier panels on the teaching of Kindergarten to Grade 3, and the reports of the Expert Panels on Student Success for Grades 7 to 12.

Both reports contain extensive support information for teachers, as well as sources and recommendations for school and board leaders.

Mathematics

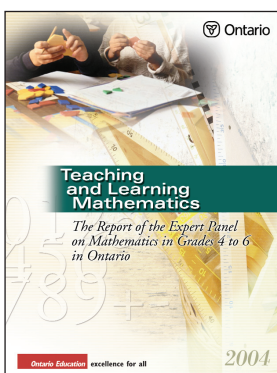
The mathematics report, *Teaching and Learning Mathematics*, provides an overview of the characteristics of effective mathematics instruction, including effective use of manipulatives, children's literature, technology and teachers' resources. The report emphasizes that, in order to meet the needs of students in the 21st Century, there is a need to focus on developing understanding of mathematics, on making connections between ideas, and on students' ability to communicate their reasoning, rather than focusing on rote learning. In addition, it makes recommendations on the roles of board leaders, principals, elementary mathematics specialists, the ministry and faculties of education in building capacity and providing support and professional development for teachers.

French-language Co-Chair Richard Gauthier, former head of the ministry's French Language Education Policy and Programs Branch commented that, "the junior years are a critical time of transition and growth in students' mathematical learning. It is during this period, in particular, that students begin to deepen their mathematical understanding, move to more abstract thinking, and begin to make connections between different concepts that can be applied in new situations."

English-language Co-Chair Alex Lawson, Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University added "we know a great deal about the kind of instruction that is likely to support our students' ability to reason mathematically about a wide range of situations and problems. We find that teachers making use of these methods are able to develop a greater level of mathematical understanding and enthusiasm in students than was the case with earlier approaches. It's very powerful to watch classrooms in which you see the children

thinking hard and debating about a mathematical idea – and their pleasure and enthusiasm when the light bulb goes on."

The report describes in detail what an effective lesson might look like (see highlight), and features a variety of instructional methods along with the use of classroom resources such as children's literature, technology and manipulatives, which can deepen student understanding. The discussion of effective instruction is also accompanied by a series of recommendations and a model for professional development, which is central to the development of capacity in mathematics education in Ontario.



“

Mathematics is a fundamental human activity...to explore, find and make sense of the regularity and order in the world is to learn mathematics and to work with it.

”

The Report of the Expert Panel on Mathematics in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario, 2004

Effective instruction: Specifics of effective instruction in a Whole-Class lesson

Beginning	• The teacher chooses a problem that offers a range of entry points for students at different levels. • The teacher poses the problem or sets the investigation without giving the steps for solution.
Middle	• Students work in pairs or in small groups to solve the problem. • Students work to make sense of the problem in their own way. They look for patterns and for connections with other problems. • The teacher asks careful questions that will help students to deepen and clarify their thinking. • Students communicate their mathematical thinking to one another, explain their ideas, listen to their peers, and talk with the teacher. • Students learn to persevere. • The teacher takes the necessary time, focusing on key ideas in some depth, rather than on a broad coverage of concepts. At least one hour a day should be allotted to mathematics instruction at the junior level. • Students and the teacher examine errors together as important opportunities for learning.
End	• Students share, explain, and examine a range of solutions with the whole class, discussing the common elements, looking for patterns, and making sense. • The teacher facilitates the sharing of ideas and discoveries in a community of learners. • The teacher organizes the discussion by choosing particular samples of students' strategies to build understanding of specific mathematical concepts and to support students' movement towards efficient methods.

Characteristics of effective mathematics instruction

Effective mathematics instruction:

- is focused on having students make sense of mathematics;
- is based on problem solving and investigation of important mathematical concepts;
- begins with the student's understanding and knowledge of the topic;
- includes students as active rather than passive participants in their learning;
- has students communicate and investigate their thinking through ongoing discussion;
- includes all students, whether in the choice of problems or in the communicating of mathematical ideas, and
- incorporates ongoing assessment of student understanding to guide future instruction.



“ Literacy is about more than reading and writing – it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture. ”

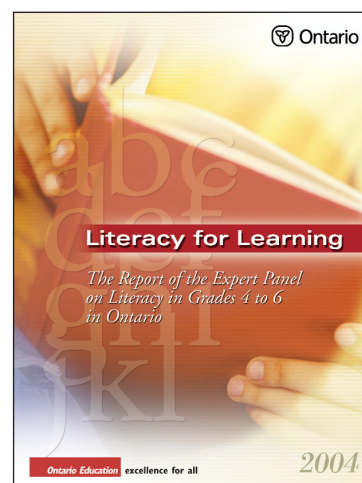
UNESCO statement for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003 – 2012

Literacy

The literacy report, *Literacy for Learning*, provides a framework for ensuring that students in Grades 4 to 6 receive the strategic instruction and support they need to develop as fully literate readers, writers, talkers and thinkers. It addresses approaches to teaching and learning including differentiated instruction to support second language learners, boys and girls, and students with special needs.

“Society is constantly shifting and evolving. New technologies are emerging every day. We are living in an increasingly global society. We absolutely must think beyond our traditional concepts of textbook literacy if we are going to prepare students to navigate the many texts they will encounter in the 21st Century,” noted English-language Co-Chair Judith Taylor, Instructional Co-ordinator for Literacy with the Peel Board of Education.

Continued on page 6



Instructional approaches for reading

READ-ALOUDS

The teacher reads a text (picture book, novel, magazine article, information text) aloud to the whole group. The teacher may stop to think aloud or use other modelling strategies. Opportunities to orally “debrief” students and to deconstruct the text may follow.

SHARED READING

The teacher presents a text on an overhead, chart, or in big-book format to the whole class or a small group. The class or group reads the text together. The text can be read chorally, silently, or by student volunteers. The teacher uses the text to demonstrate one or more teaching points.

DRAMA/READER'S THEATRE

Using a variety of dramatic responses, students can both deepen and demonstrate their understanding of a text. Strategies such as role play and tableaux allow students to express their understandings both orally and physically. Reader's theatre is an excellent vehicle for rehearsing and improving fluent reading.

GUIDED READING

Students in a small group read a book selected by the teacher to provide a moderate challenge, and, while reading, they use previously taught

strategies and skills to construct meaning. The teacher coaches and prompts the students in effective reading strategies, supports vocabulary learning, and models questioning to promote higher-order thinking and critical literacy. The small-group structure gives the teacher opportunities to meet individual needs.

LITERATURE CIRCLES/BOOK CLUBS

Students are gathered into flexible, dynamic groupings to discuss texts they are reading or have read. These circles offer students opportunities to discuss books and develop reflective practices. They also offer students opportunities to choose books, describe personal responses, and discuss features of texts. In addition, students learn social skills as they share leadership, responsibilities, and experiences in a community of learners.

INDEPENDENT OR SELF-SELECTED READING

Students select their own books and independently practice the skills and strategies introduced in large- and small-group instruction. Students are encouraged to select books of personal interest at an easy or instructional level. To build a community of readers, teachers may also provide opportunities for students to share their reading and their responses to the texts with their classmates.

Examples can be found in chapter 9 of the report.

Literacy continued

The report provides a vision for a whole-school, whole-board approach to literacy instruction, as well as recommended practices for school and board leaders. It also observes that building strong home-school-community partnerships are essential for literacy learning and overall student achievement. Commenting on the panel's process, French-language Literacy Co-Chair Réjean Aubut stated, "I was amazed by the exceptional spirit of collaboration that prevailed around the table among the francophone and anglophone participants. Both groups had a great deal to share and offer each other. Together, I believe we've created a genuine learning community and a report that reflects the realities and the needs of all junior learners throughout the province."

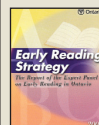
Supporting students at each stage of the writing process

	What students do	What teachers do
Generating ideas	- Access their prior knowledge - Identify the purpose, audience, and form for their writing - Immerse themselves in the topic - Collect information	- Build context and learning experiences through read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading - Draw on students' prior knowledge - Provide students with plenty of opportunities to talk and confer about the topic and text form - Model the structure and features of the text form
Drafting	- Organize and plan ideas (e.g., using webs, idea logs, electronic and other graphic organizers, writer's notebooks) - Create a written draft, using word processing and other productivity tools where appropriate - Use graphic organizers to support their thinking - Organize writing to reflect the text form, text features, and audience	- Provide students with graphic/anchor charts, where appropriate, to help them organize their thinking - Use modelled and shared writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons - Coach individuals or small groups
Rethinking/ revising	- Focus on clarity and content, adding and deleting ideas as necessary - Reread work to revise word choice and writing style - Consult reference materials (e.g., a thesaurus, another writer's work) - Confer with peers and/or the teacher - Use a revision checklist or guiding questions	- Use modelled, shared, and guided writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons that demonstrate the revision process - Provide students with revision guidelines and anchor charts for reference - Coach individuals or small groups
Editing/ proofreading	- Reread work to edit for grammar, spelling, and punctuation - Consult reference materials - Confer with peers and/or the teacher - Use an editing checklist or guiding questions	- Use modelled, shared, and guided writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons that demonstrate the editing process - Provide students with editing guidelines and anchor charts for reference - Coach individuals or small groups
Publishing/ sharing	- Rewrite revised and edited drafts to present to a pre-determined audience - Polish the presentation format (e.g., fonts, graphics, text layout) - Ensure that the presentation style matches the form, purpose, and audience	- Use modelled, shared, and guided writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons that outline the publishing process for a specific audience - Provide students with publishing resources (e.g., slide-show software, website pages) - Provide students with opportunities for presenting, sharing, and/or displaying partial or completed texts

BRIDGING THE GAP: ONTARIO'S EXPERT PANELS

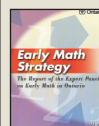
The Grades 4 to 6 literacy and numeracy reports provide a bridge between the K-3 and 7-12 reports and resources on literacy and numeracy.

K – 3



Early Reading Strategy

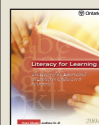
The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario, 2003



Early Math Strategy

The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Math in Ontario, 2003

4 – 6



Literacy for Learning

The report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario



Teaching and Learning Mathematics

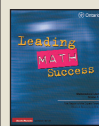
The Report of the Expert Panel on Mathematics in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario

7 – 12



Think Literacy Success

Grades 7-12: The Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario



Leading Math Success

Mathematical Literacy Grades 7-12, The reports of the Expert Panel on Student Success in Ontario

MENTORING FOR NEW TEACHERS:

Projects launched in fall 2004

“...beginning teachers who receive support are more effective teachers in their early years...”

In the mini-discussion paper, on the subject of “Teacher Excellence”, released in August 2004 one sector of the teaching profession discussed is beginning teachers. The paper advocates that beginning teachers need additional supports, including an induction program, in order to enhance their effectiveness, and seeks to engage educational partners to develop new approaches. The paper has been posted on the ministry website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/partnership. Readers are encouraged to submit their ideas and opinions.

An induction program typically provides support to new professionals which helps to more quickly accelerate their performance from newly minted graduate to a full-fledged professional. Research shows that beginning teachers who receive support are more effective teachers in their early years and they tend to focus on student achievement sooner. Induction may include a range of activities such as orientation sessions, observation of experienced staff and mentoring.

Planned and sustained support for new teachers through an induction program is vital to keeping them in the profession. Mentoring is a valuable component of a strong induction program. Projects designed to explore best practices for mentoring new teachers have been launched at 21 Ontario school boards.

The projects will explore practices that ease the transition from faculty to classroom and support teachers in their critical first year in the profession. Programs such as mentor training models, beginning teacher orientation, professional development specific to new teachers, training programs for administrators, release time for beginning teachers and mentors, and other innovative approaches will be examined during the pilot.

The results will assist in identifying best practices and indicators of success that could be incorporated into a future province-wide induction and mentoring program. More than 3000 new teachers are expected to benefit from these initial projects.



WHAT NEW TEACHERS SAY THEY NEED

Over the past year, ministry staff informally interviewed a number of first year teachers about their specific needs. The Ontario College of Teachers also conducted a survey of both first and second year teachers, which provided similar information:

- In-school practical experiences during the pre-service training were often characterized as insufficient or inconsistent
- Many new teachers suggested the need for more practice experience in the pre-service years, and more practical support in their first year of teaching in order to be better prepared to meet the needs of their students
- A number of new teachers reported that they were given first year assignments, such as special education classes, split grades, or Grade 3 EQAO testing year classes, for which they felt they were not adequately prepared
- Frequent changes in position and assignments in the first two years of teachers' careers also add to their stress
- If teachers were hired late, there was typically no formal orientation to the board or school
- Many new teachers expressed a feeling of isolation in their first year of teaching, particularly those who reported having difficulty with their assignments
- Beginning teachers consistently expressed a need for support in the areas of
 - Classroom management
 - Student assessment
 - Planning
 - Motivating students
 - Dealing with individual student needs
 - Problems communicating with parents
- Most new teachers in the province do not have a mentor to help them, while all teachers surveyed indicated that an experienced teacher assigned to help them would have been greatly appreciated

Continued on page 8

Who benefits from mentoring?

Mentoring programs are designed to provide new teachers with support, guidance, feedback and problem-solving assistance from experienced colleagues who share resources, insights, practices and materials. As studies have shown, mentoring also provides a unique leadership opportunity for the mentoring teacher and, ultimately, contributes to enhanced student achievement.

The literature on beginning teachers suggests the following well-documented benefits:

- Reducing new teacher attrition
- Helping to increase the skill levels of new teachers
- Providing teachers with a supportive transition into the profession
- Enhancing student performance, as demonstrated in recent studies from California and Texas
- Keeping academically talented teachers in teaching
- Providing leadership opportunities to mentoring teachers
- Creating a school-wide culture of mentoring which stimulates exploration of best practices and the sharing of knowledge and experience
- Reducing the cost of teacher recruitment

POLITIQUE D'AMÉNAGEMENT LINGUISTIQUE:

New French-language Policy to support language, culture and community

A new French-language Policy, *Politique d'aménagement linguistique de l'Ontario pour l'éducation en langue française, 2004*, has been introduced in Ontario's French-language schools to improve student achievement and enhance French language and culture.

The policy provides a framework for Ontario's French-language schools, district school boards and school authorities to foster and strengthen French-language education in a minority context. It was launched this past October, at a conference, in Toronto, attended by more than 400 French-language educators and leaders from across the province.

Developed through a consultation process that involved educators, senior officials, parents, students, and community members, the policy is based on the underlying concept of sustainability for both French-language educational institutions and the communities they serve:

- Sustainability of the French-language school boards in order to expand and maintain quality education
- Sustainability of French-language schools so they can offer programs and services that support teaching and learning strategies adapted to a minority context
- Sustainability of the French-language community as a whole by helping students develop a strong sense of belonging to the francophone community, and contributing to its development

Among features of the policy are an *aménagement linguistique* framework developed for French-language education that encompasses five intervention areas, and a Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework which supports policy implementation at the local level.

Politique d'aménagement linguistique: Key areas of intervention

Learning	Knowledge and skills prescribed by the Ontario curriculum Language support programs.	Personal and career growth
Identity Building	Strong self-esteem as a Francophone	Commitment to French- language and culture
Participative Leadership	Professional development for board staff in teaching and learning in a minority context	Implementation of learning communities
Commitment	Parental Parents' role in the transmission of language and culture	School support to parents
	Community Community's role in the transmission of language and culture	Involvement in curriculum / community-based projects
Institutional vitality	Recruiting new students through promotion and intake	Research in pedagogical approaches for a minority context

The policy proposes that all stakeholders collaboratively plan a series of systemic interventions (at the board level and the provincial level) in order to build capacity for students, schools and school boards, and the community to contribute to the sustainable development of the francophone community in Ontario through three key outcomes:

Students' capacity building in oral communication

Mastering oral communication, reading and writings in the French-language is a fundamental underpinning for gaining knowledge, developing self-esteem through fluency and ease with the French-language, and developing an understanding of the French culture, its traditions and its adaptation.

This capacity building will help the ministry attain its goal of student achievement and success.

Staff capacity in teaching and learning

Teachers in French-language schools teach Ontario's curriculum and implement standards set by the ministry while nurturing the development of a strong sense of belonging to a francophone community. Understanding the impact of the minority context on learning and teaching and developing the skills and teaching strategies adapted to that context are an essential part of the capacity that has to be developed.

In order to build this particular capacity, teachers and French-language schools in general are encouraged to form learning communities that integrate parents and the community as a whole into the school environment. This way, parents and community members become active contributors in helping the school nurture language and culture and attain high level of student success.

Board capacity in sustaining growth

Boards have to maintain a certain level of services and programs in order to offer the quality education promised to parents and students. Therefore, boards have to develop the capacity to grow through an active recruitment strategy. This strategy is based on promotion, intake, and research and development.

In order to attain those capacities, the ministry, in collaboration with the French-language school boards and school authorities, will develop a resource guide on implementation of a results-based management framework and determine a set of performance indicators. Other resource guides will address school-community projects and competencies for teaching in a minority setting.

A companion document is offered in French and English to parents and students that describe the importance of their active participation in the transmission of the French language and culture. That document can be viewed on the ministry website at www.edu.gov.on.ca by selecting 'Publications' followed by 'Brochures and Other Publications'.

The policy document and companion guide has been distributed to school boards and their schools, and to the various partners that are members of the French-language education community as a whole.

AT A GLANCE:

Key aims of Politique d'aménagement linguistique

Students:

increased capacity to acquire oral communication skills to maximize learning and identity building

School staff:

increased capacity to work in a minority setting to support the academic learning and identity building of every student

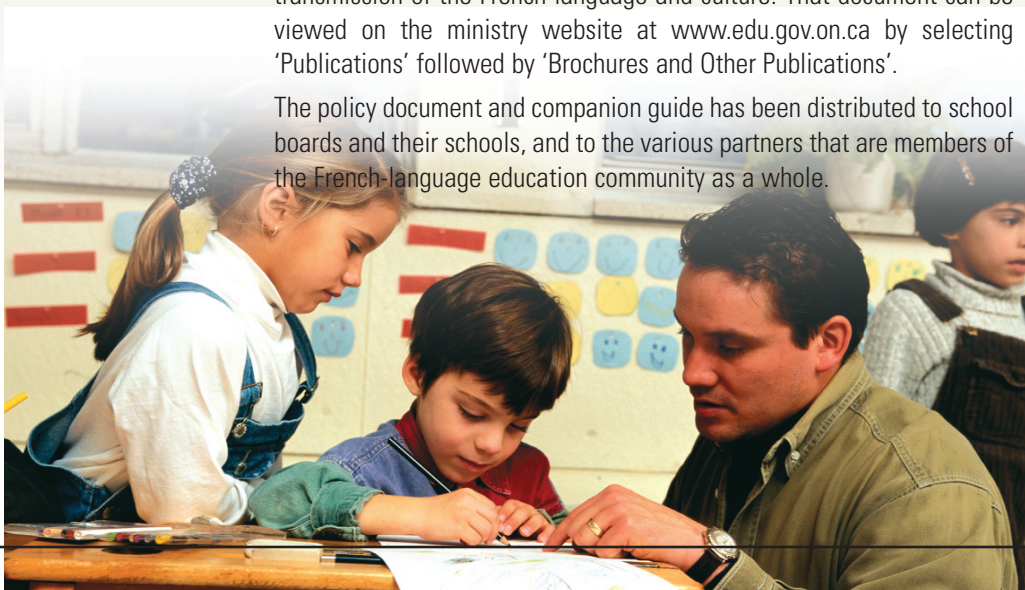
School boards:

increased capacity to maintain and increase student enrolment to contribute to the vitality of French-language schools and the broader Francophone community

“

...the policy is based on the underlying concept of sustainability for both French-language educational institutions and the communities they serve...

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NEW RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Subject-specific literacy resources: were developed by subject experts to extend the resource document *Think Literacy: Cross-Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12*. These new resources utilize the existing approaches for reading, writing and oral communication outlined in *Think Literacy* and customize them with subject-specific examples that support Grades 7 to 10 teachers to embed literacy approaches in their subject areas. The new resources, which will be posted electronically on subject association websites and distributed with accompanying training through Student Success Leaders in district school boards, include:

- Business Studies (BBI 10/20, BTT 10/20)
- Computer Studies (Grades 7-9)
- Family Studies (HFN 10/20, HIF 10/20)
- French as a Second Language (Intermediate core)
- Geography (Grades 7-9)
- Health and Physical Education (Grades 7-9)
- History (Grades 7-8)
- Hospitality and Tourism (Grades 10-12)
- International Languages (Levels 1 & 2)
- Language/English (Grades 7-9)
- Music (Grades 7-9)
- Science and Technology (Grades 7-8),
Science (Grade 9 Applied)
- Teacher-Librarians (Grades 7-9)
- Technology (Grades 7-9)

Web-based e-Learning Modules: which were developed by the ministry and produced in partnership with TVO/TFO to support teachers and administrators in literacy, numeracy and school leadership, are hosted at www.eworkshop.on.ca (English) www.atelier.on.ca (French). New modules introduced this fall include:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| • Literacy | • Numeracy |
| – Shared reading K-3 (English) | – Operational sense (English) |
| – Lecture partagée M à 3 ^e (French) | – Interrelations (French) |

Achievement charts: developed as part of the ongoing cycle of curriculum review, are designed to provide greater consistency across panels and across subject disciplines. Draft versions of the new achievement charts can be viewed on the ministry website at:

English – <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/achievement/charts1to12.pdf>

French – <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre/document/policy/achievement/charts1to12.pdf>

Me Read? No Way!: a new guide for teachers on how to engage boys in literacy will be introduced at a symposium on boys' literacy in early 2005. Copies of the booklet will be distributed to elementary and secondary schools by early 2005. The booklet will also be posted on the ministry website under 'publications'.

Guidance resources: on workplace preparation tailored to the needs of guidance teachers have been posted on the ministry website. To access the resources, go to the 'spotlight' section of the main page at www.edu.gov.on.ca and click on Opening Doors to a Skilled Workforce then click on Guidance Counsellors.



LOCALLY DEVELOPED COMPULSORY CREDIT COURSES

Expanding to meet student needs

Students in Ontario schools can now earn up to six credits toward a secondary school diploma through locally developed compulsory credit courses (LDCC) in English-language boards and up to seven credits in French-language boards.

Locally developed courses are courses developed by school boards to meet educational needs that are not met by courses outlined in the curriculum policy documents. The courses are developed to accommodate the educational or career preparation needs of students in a particular school or region, or to provide students who have gaps in their knowledge and skills with the support they need to be successful in Grades 11 and 12 workplace preparation courses. This will enable students to meet the graduation requirements for their high school diploma by taking courses that are relevant to their needs and interests, and meet the requirements of post-secondary employers.

Six new LDCC courses for English-language boards have been developed, including Grade 9 and 10 English, Mathematics and Science, and a seventh, Grade 10 History, is scheduled to be available by January 2005. For French-language school boards, seven new LDCC courses have been developed, including Grades 9 and 10 French, Mathematics and Sciences, and Grade 9 English. An eighth course, Grade 10 History, is scheduled to be available in January 2005.

Expectations for the new LDCC courses have been developed to reflect the importance of literacy and numeracy in all grades and subjects and to interconnect literacy and numeracy with content understanding in content-based subjects. The courses are also designed to align with the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP), a bilingual, web-based tool that provides clear descriptions of skill requirements for entry-level work in the labour market, and records student attainment of those skills.

New Guidance and Career education courses are also being developed to help provide students with essential workplace skills and work habits. These courses, like the new LDCC courses, will broaden the selection of courses available to schools to develop successful pathways for all students.

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READER SURVEY

Thanks for your input!

Thanks to the many readers who responded to the first annual Reader Survey in the last edition of Curriculum Update. Here's what you said:

- Re-design the publication and adopt new colours
- The newsletter increases your understanding of education policies and programs but there is room for us to improve in this area
- Maintain the same quarterly frequency
- Provide a mix of long and short articles
- Focus on ministry policies and programs, teaching practice, resources and coming events

Any personal information you provide will be used by the Ministry of Education to distribute Curriculum Update. Your name will not be placed on any other mailing list. We encourage our readers to comment on the publication. Although the Ministry will not be able to acknowledge or respond to individual comments, any comments you may provide may be considered in the Ministry's policy development process. With your consent, your comments or edited versions of them may be published in Curriculum Update. Your personal information is collected in accordance with s. 39(2) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31, as amended. If you have questions about the collection of your personal information, please contact the Director, Programs Support Branch, 16th Floor, Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2 (416) 212-4650.

SOFTWARE REVIEW

John Palbom

John Palbom is the computer consultant for Trillium Lakelands District School Board. He is also a member of the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee and has extensive expertise in the use of educational software as a teaching and learning tool. Here he offers a review of three software packages designed to foster independent writing skills in all students.

Co:Writer

Co:Writer is word prediction software that helps students to clearly express their ideas using complete and complex sentence structures.

As the student begins to type a word, Co:Writer attempts to predict which word the student may want to use and presents a list of alternatives which is updated as new letters are typed. Commonly used words are tracked and float to the top of the alternatives list. The software includes dictionary choices of 2000, 10,000 or 40,000 words and dictionaries can be edited to support students at all points in the learning continuum.

Originally intended for students with special needs, Co:Writer can help all students to enhance their literacy and writing skills.

Write OutLoud

As the name implies, Write OutLoud is a talking word processor. It provides immediate spoken feedback to students as they type letters, words, sentences or paragraphs. The software provides comprehensive dictionaries with definitions and meanings, and a homonym checker, which allow students to improve their writing, composition and editing skills.

A talking toolbar offers a choice of font, font size, font colour, and background colour. Shortcut keys are also available for users who have difficulty using a mouse. Spoken text is highlighted, making it easier for the student to track the passage. Users who have to focus their eyes on the keyboard will appreciate the voice component of Write OutLoud.

For beginning writers, Write OutLoud helps to establish a connection between the written and spoken word. The program can help to build a student's confidence as Write OutLoud provides hints and suggestions about appropriate word usage.

Clicker4

Clicker4 is a talking word processor and symbol writing software package that includes both images and speech.

The Clicker screen is divided into Clicker Writer and Clicker Grid sections. Students can type directly into the Writer or use a combination of words and symbols from the Grid. Like Write OutLoud, Clicker4 can be customized to read back letters, words, and sentences as they are written.

Clicker4 comes with 1000 images, and users can create their own library of pictures, through scanning, digital cameras, and other sources. If a child is unable to remember a word on the grid, he or she can click on it to hear it spoken before adding the word to the Writer. Grids are easily created and populated with words in very little time. The Grid can also be used to develop word walls in the primary grades.

How to find these software packages

You should find Clicker4, Co:Writer and Write OutLoud installed and available in your school. Ask your computer lead teacher for more information if you are unable to find these titles. For more information about these and other software packages, go to www.osaoac.org and follow the link to software.

Each year a wide variety of software titles is licensed by the Ministry of Education for use in publicly funded Ontario schools. Information on these titles is available through Ontario Educational Software Service (OESS) representatives at each board. To search for the OESS representative in your board, go to www.tvo.org/oess. To keep up to date on licensed software resources, visit the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC) website at www.osapac.org. It contains news on software releases, negotiations, an online survey and a complete database of licensed software titles with many links to the curriculum expectations and other resources. If you are interested in profiling a software title for Curriculum Update, write us at editor@curriculum-update.info.