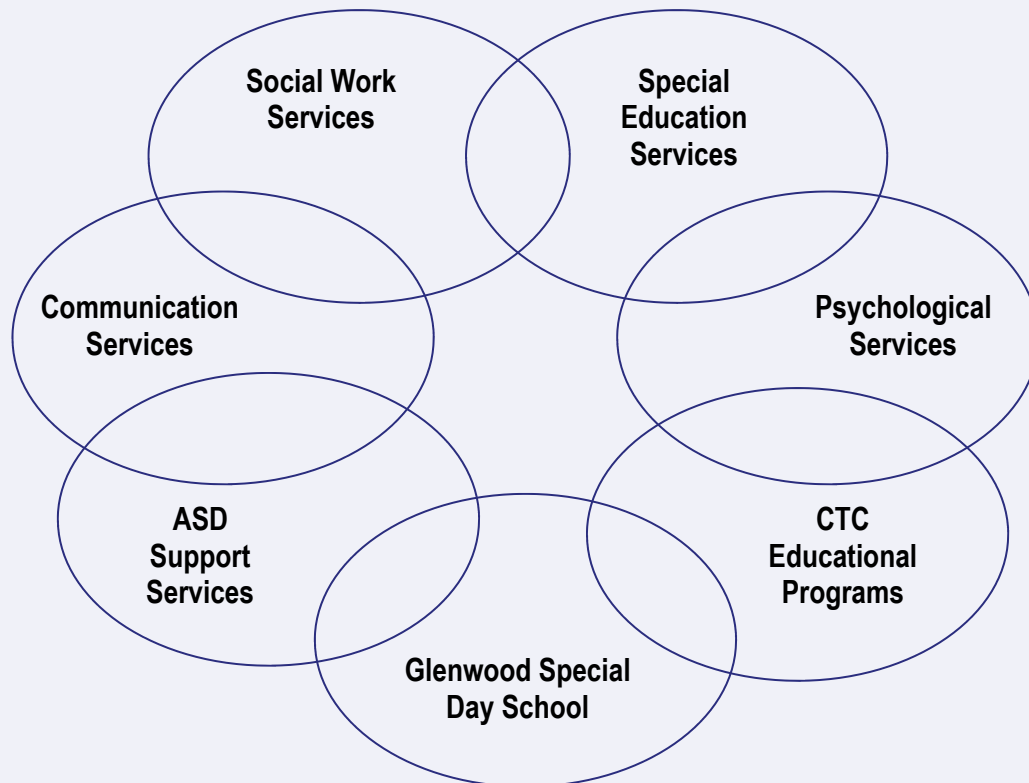


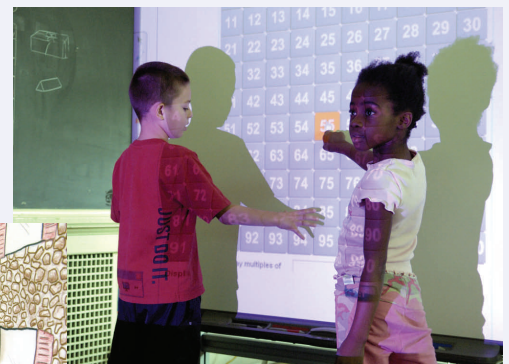


**HAMILTON-  
WENTWORTH**  
DISTRICT  
SCHOOL  
BOARD

# SPECIAL EDUCATION / STUDENT SERVICES



## 2008-2009 INITIATIVES



# DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTIONS

The staff of Special Education / Student Services (Communication Services; Psychological Services; Social Work Services; Special Education Services; Care, Treatment, Corrections (Section 23) Programs; and Glenwood Special Day School) continue to strive to serve the students and staff of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, in alignment with the Board Improvement Plan focus areas:

## **Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Based on the identified areas of greatest student need, the board plan for literacy includes a focus on: critical literacy; explicit literacy strategy instruction; helping students develop metacognitive skills; differentiating instruction; assessing for learning; implementing a comprehensive literacy program (elementary); and the effective use of literacy learning blocks.*

## **Numeracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Based on the identified areas of greatest student need, the board plan for numeracy includes a focus on: mathematics content knowledge; explicit mathematics strategy instruction; investigative, problem-solving based learning; mathematical processes; differentiating instruction; assessment for learning.*

## **Pathways**

*The board plan for Pathways includes a focus on giving students opportunities to improve their prospects for success in school and life by helping students identify their personal interests, strengths, competencies, abilities and accomplishments and connect these to their learning in school, using this knowledge of themselves to inform their choice of programs and learning opportunities, and providing a range of learning opportunities, courses and programs both in and out of school that meet the needs and interests of students.*

## **Community, Culture and Caring**

*Building an equitable, inclusive and engaging environment that is conducive to student learning in the classroom, the school, and the community.*

and the Departmental focus areas:

## **Clear and Focused Mission**

*The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will continue to provide a wide range of special education program and service options for students whose complexity of needs exceeds that of the regular classroom.*

## **Instructional Leadership**

*The Special Education / Student Services Department will develop detailed guidelines regarding the roles, responsibilities and accountability of support staff within the special education delivery model.*

## **Safe and Orderly Environment**

*The Special Education / Student Services Department will develop a plan to support student and staff safety by increasing the base knowledge of all staff to address and manage behaviour.*

## **Climate of High Expectations / Frequent Monitoring of Student Success**

*The Special Education / Student Services Department will develop a plan to increase the base knowledge and strategies of all classroom teachers and administrators in the area of special education exceptionalities, early intervention, and student pathways.*

## **Positive School / Home / Community Relations**

*The Special Education / Student Services Department will develop a comprehensive plan to address the most effective model of both delivery and the flow of information related to special education programs and services.*

# BEHAVIOUR PROGRAM PATHWAY (elementary)

## 2008-09 Program:

The purposes of the re-designed Behaviour Program Pathway were to:

- provide support at the elementary level (early intervention) to address behavioural concerns;
- improve the outcomes for students by addressing behaviours and providing appropriate supports in the least intrusive setting possible;
- increase teacher knowledge and capacity to address behaviour concerns;
- approach behaviour in a more proactive manner.

Level 1: This support involved itinerant Behaviour Teams in each cluster. The Teams assisted schools in analyzing and planning for students in their home school setting, such as planning and implementing individual behaviour plans and classroom management strategies.

Level 2: This support involved a partial withdrawal program whereby selected students attended a program half-time to develop the skills necessary to participate more fully in their regular classroom program.

Level 3: Students at this level attended self-contained special classes, with resources available to assist them with significant behavioural and/or mental health needs.

## 2008-09 Results:

**Level 1** supported 224 elementary students. The feedback received to date has been positive, particularly in the second half of the year, as the operational aspects of the program became established. A mental health screening tool, The Brief Family and Child Phone Interview (BCFPI), was used to assess the extent of the mental health concerns impacting on the students' emotional and behavioural functioning. The results showed the following percentages for the students in Behaviour Pathways Program who scored in the clinical range:

<u>Item / Measure</u>	<u>%</u>
Externalizing (anger, attention, etc.)	86.4
Managing Mood	67.5
Internalizing (depression, anxiety, etc.)	40.5
Total Mental Health	83.7
Quality of Relationships	80.5

It was anticipated that more referrals would be received regarding students in the Junior division (grades 4-6). However, a great many referrals were also received for students in lower grades (JK-3), as indicated below:

<u>Division</u>	<u>% of Referrals Received</u>
Primary (JK-3)	55
Junior (4-6)	37
Intermediate (7-8)	8

**Level 2** supported 41 students. Students accessing this level of support presented with more significant needs than was originally anticipated. Although several individual students exhibited positive change, feedback received was that the program was largely unsuccessful in addressing the students' issues or in transitioning students back into their home schools. Transference of positive behaviour/skills exhibited in the program back to the home school environment was limited.

**Level 3:** Three classes were operated during the 2008-2009 year servicing 24 children: one Junior program and 2 Intermediate programs. The students presented with externalizing behaviour disorder diagnoses, as well as having experienced significant problems of a psycho-social issue and/or learning difficulties. Many also had had significant attendance issues. The classes had a high staff to student ratio (4 staff members to 8 students). Students in the Level 3 program met with varying degrees of success, related to the individual needs.

In all levels, some students experienced a de-escalation of behaviours, such that attendance improved and suspensions were reduced. However, the results are not directly contributable to this program alone, as it is a part of a collaboration with other initiatives, principally Safe Schools strategies and activities.

#### **2009-10 Directions:**

The results from the initial year of the program and feedback received from staff (system and school-based) and elementary administrators were reviewed by a multidisciplinary writing team. Several changes/enhancements/refinements are being introduced for the 2009-2010 school year.

The program has been renamed **Character Networks**, to reflect the inter-connectedness of the program with other board and community initiatives aimed at improving student success through improved student behaviour, and to emphasize the positive and proactive approach to addressing behavioural challenges. The program has been refined and is more prescriptive in its approach to assist students through the development of social skills and anger management techniques, and through understanding themselves as learners. The main goal remains: to enable the students to be able to fully participate in, and be available to, learning activities.

The program will continue to involve three differentiated levels of support:

- **Character Networks: Pathways Program;** Universal Program - Inclusion Intervention;
- **Character Networks: Centre Program;** Selected Program - Withdrawal Intervention; and
- **Character Networks: Class Program;** Targeted Program: Self-Contained Class Intervention.

Character Networks relies on an inter-disciplinary approach to addressing behaviour, including connections to other supports and resources. Referrals to other system supports may be deemed appropriate, as a result of determining what is the underlying cause of a particular student's behaviour. Community supports for students and families will also be explored, where appropriate.

Character Networks will continue to prioritize having students remain in their home school, with both the student and staff receiving useable strategies and interventions within the least restrictive environment. Character Networks: Pathways will continue to build upon the success of the former Pathways Level 1, with an increased focus on a variety of strategies reflecting individual student needs and implementable in the home classroom environment. The Pathways Program will be increased from 5 teams to 6, and be distributed throughout the district based on need, as demonstrated through the referrals received in the first year of the program.

There was a need to restructure the former Pathways Level 2 and create a new model, Character Network Centres. The purpose of the Centre remains: to build the capacity of the selected students to function more independently in their home school through the transference of behavioural skills learned in a more intensive setting. However, for the students who require this level of intervention and support, it became evident that a prescriptive program needed to be developed within the Character Networks Centers. This new program will provide more focused and direct instruction on anger management, social skills, self-awareness, and other skills as required. The Centre staff will work more closely with the home school to increase the capacity of both the student and the home school staff to allow for the successful reentry and transference of strategies upon completion of the program. Critical to the student will be the strong support and collaboration of Centre and home school staff in the successful transference of the learned skills and strategies. Many elements learned from the success of the Centre for Success learning disabilities project will be included in this program, such as ensuring the students understand how they learn.

The former Pathways Level 3 classes will continue under the new title: Character Networks: Class Program. An additional Junior class has been added. The program will be further enhanced by elements of the more focused and direct instruction program being introduced in the Centre program, as appropriate.

# LEARNING DISABILITIES PATHWAY (elementary)

## 2008-09 Program:

The purposes of the development of a Learning Disabilities (LD) Pathway was to:

- increase the capacity of teachers to address the unique learning needs of students with learning disabilities; and
- provide appropriate technology and training for teachers and students.

### Level 1: Elementary and Secondary

Appropriate assistive technology was ordered through the Ministry's Special Equipment Amount (SEA) process and training was provided by the Assistive Technology Team.

### Level 2: Targeted Intervention Program (Elementary)

An intensive intervention program was developed by a multi-disciplinary team and taught by special assignment teachers to address, for a select group of students, specific educational needs (i.e., organizational skills; social/emotional concerns; technology; specific learning needs).

## 2008-09 Results:

A multi-disciplinary Special Education / Student Services team examined current research and best practices in other districts with regard to programming supports for elementary students with learning disabilities. From that research, the team developed a six-week intervention program for regular class grade five students who have basic literacy and numeracy skills, but who have experienced limited academic gains, and have become disengaged in their learning as a result of their learning challenges.

The pilot program, the Centre for Success project, was a strength-based, strategy focussed intervention program, designed to enable students to be able to identify and explain their personal learning profiles, develop a thorough understanding of the use of their assistive technology in order to maximize opportunities for them to demonstrate their learning, and to be able to self-advocate for the implementation of specific strategies to support their learning.

All students accessing the program currently had IEPs in place and had received a psycho-educational assessment with a diagnosis of a learning disability. Students also already had access to a laptop computer through a Special Equipment Amount (SEA) claim. In order for the skills learned in the program to be transferable to the home school setting upon the students' return to the regular classroom, parents and home school staff were an integral part of the program. The students maintained daily contact with their home school teacher through email, and parents and home school staff were provided with opportunities to visit the Centre for Success to observe the students' progress. The program also incorporated one week transition at the start of session, with special assignment teachers completing an initial observation in the home school environment, and a one week follow-up session in the home school at the conclusion of the Centre program.

15 students participated in the first 2 pilot sessions held from February to June 2009. All students experienced increased success in the program and were able to self-advocate in their home school settings following the session. All students increased their knowledge of their personal assistive technology. The importance of understanding themselves as learners exceeded the initial expectations.

## 2009-10 Directions:

The Centre for Success program has expanded to two sites for 2009-2010. The expansion will enable up to 60 students to access the program over the course of this school year. Additional information as to the long-term success of the program will be collected. Successful aspects of this program are being examined as to their effectiveness in other program areas, such as the Character Networks: Centres program.

# INTERNAL IEP REVIEW

## 2008-09 Program:

Samples of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were collected from all schools and monitored to ensure that they had:

- measurable goals;
- appropriate instructional strategies; and
- appropriate accommodated, modified and/or alternative expectations.
- 

## 2008-09 Results:

In order to assess Individual Education Plans, and to determine next steps as far as professional development with regard to IEPs was concerned, schools submitted to the Special Education / Student Services department copies of IEPs for review:

- Secondary Schools: 6 IEPs; and
- Elementary Schools: 3 IEPs.

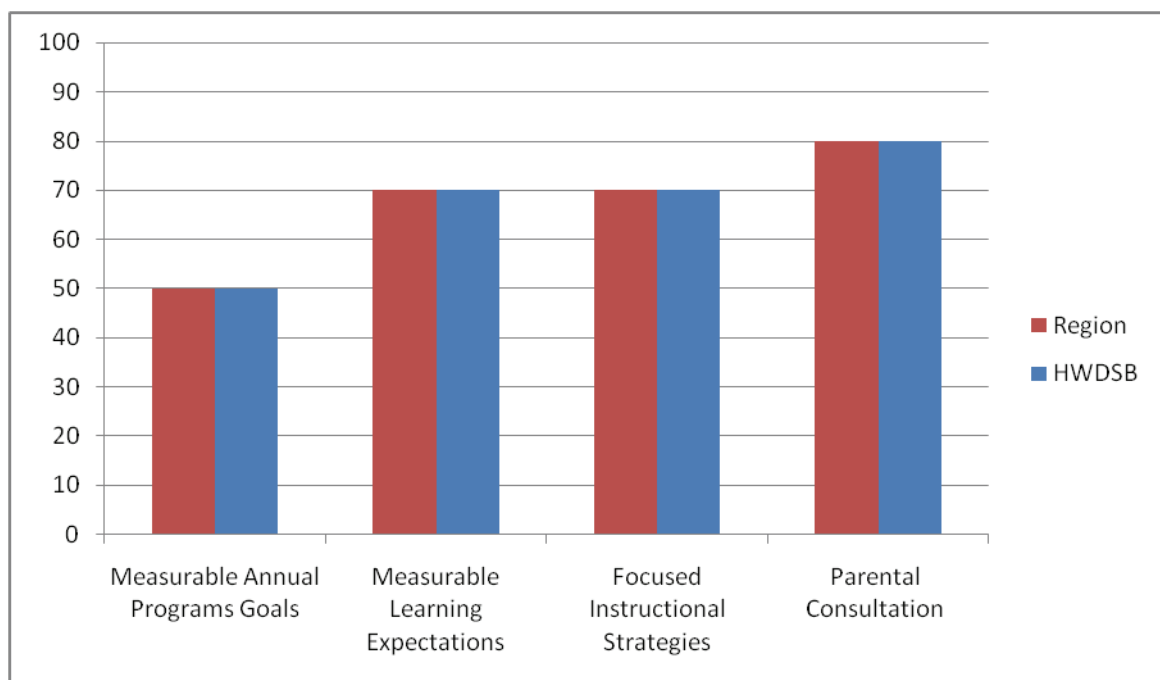
Included in the samples were examples of the following:

- IEPs for students within the Autism spectrum (with respect to the implementation of PPM 140);
- IEPs for a students with Learning Disabilities (with respect to specific accommodations);
- IEPs for students in regular classes; and
- IEPs for students in Special Education Classes (with respect to alternative expectations).

Approximately 400 IEPs were collected. Most were reviewed during the 2008-09 school year using a template developed to assist with the review. Initial findings indicate that, overall as a system, learning and teaching expectations were appropriate to the students for whom the IEPs were developed. Accommodated, modified, and alternative expectations were generally clearly written and appropriate. More information needs to be provided in the areas of:

- clearly identifying specific student strengths and needs based on assessment information;
- ensuring alignment of various sections of the IEP;
- writing measurable (SMART) goals, particularly for annual learning goals; and
- providing more measurable assessment strategies.

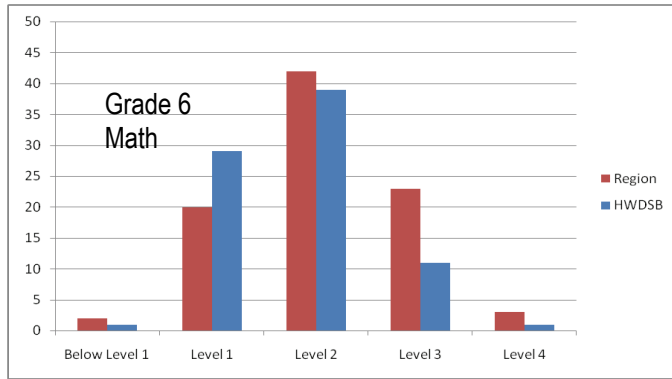
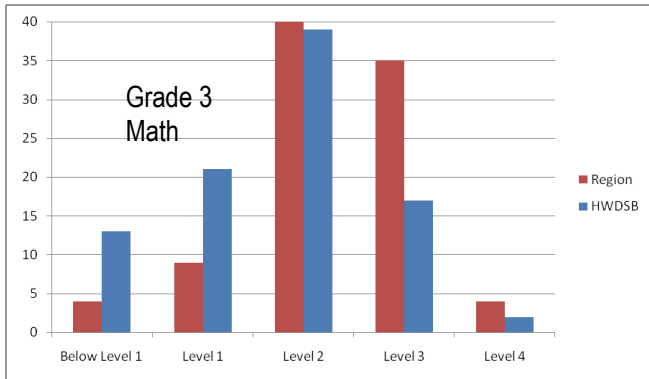
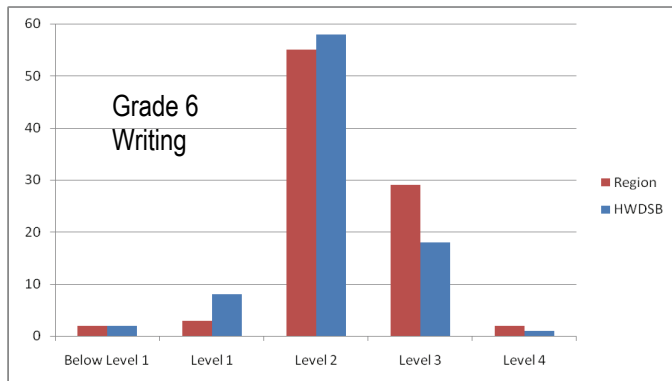
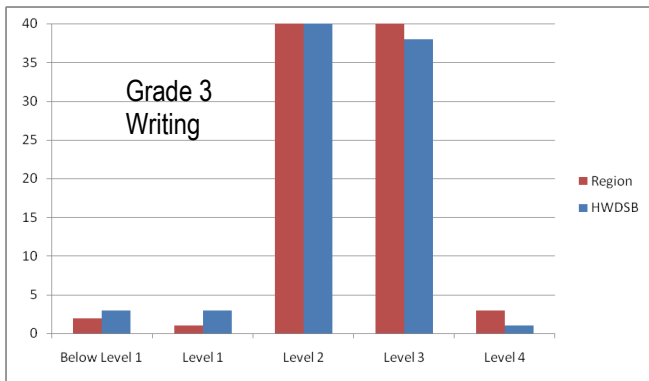
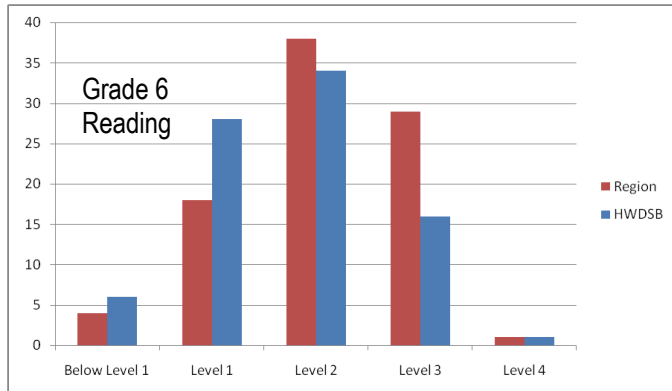
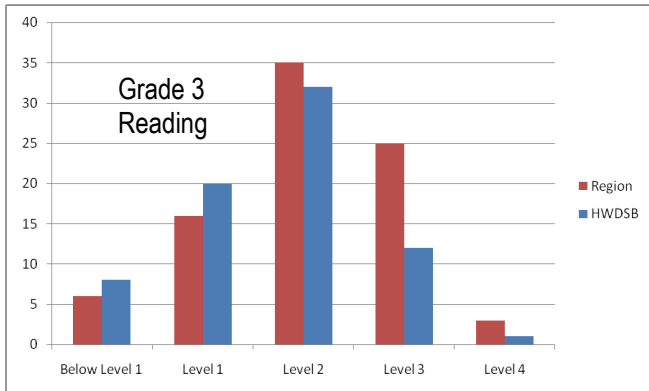
HWDSB also participated in a regional IEP Review Project, involving 16 public and catholic boards. This provided us with a comparison of the results of our review with that of the region.



The comparison with the regional data indicates that our results are consistent with results from other boards in our area.

# INTERNAL IEP REVIEW

The regional data collected also included comparison of some EQAO data (2008 results) as follows:



## 2009-10 Directions:

The remaining IEPs collected during the audit will be reviewed. Specific feedback will be given to schools. The template developed to assist in the review process proved to be an equally useful tool to use while developing IEPs, as it indicates the sections of the Ministry Standards document and the IEP Resource Guide which can provide detailed information on each section. Thus, the template will be used to focus in-service sessions, which will be offered to schools and specifically targeted staff (system staff; Learning Resource Teachers). The template will also be provided to schools to use during the development of IEPs. Reference will be made to the relationships between IEPs and other initiatives, such as the focus on differentiated instruction and the use of Premier assistive technology (now available to all schools). HWDSB will continue to participate in the regional data collection on IEPs. As such, a smaller sample of IEPs will be assessed during 2009-2010 year.

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS (Section 23 Standards)

### 2008-09 Program:

The Ministry of Education developed draft Standards for the educational portion of the classroom programs in Care, Treatment, and Corrections (CTC) sites (commonly referred to as Section 23 programs), in the areas of

- assessment, evaluation and reporting on student achievement;
- instruction and intervention;
- transition planning; and
- information management and reporting.

Each of these areas was designated as an Essential Element.

HWDSB was chosen as the pilot board for this region, and as such began the implementation of the standards locally while providing regional and provincial feedback on the pilot project.

### 2008-09 Results:

The teachers working in Section 23 classrooms were organized by Learning Communities, (Corrections, Elementary Treatment, Secondary Treatment, Care). Each Learning Community performed a gap analysis in the Fall examining the level of implementation of each Essential Element (none, somewhat, partial, full). This data was used to identify the focus for improvement for each of the Essential Elements in each Learning Community. It should be noted that 88% of the Essential Elements were identified by all Learning Communities as in the “partial” or “full” implementation stage.

Those Essential Elements that were identified by each Learning Community as in the “none” or “somewhat” stage were labeled as areas for improvement and in turn included in the CTC School Improvement Plan for 2009-10 school year.

Staff from HWDSB programs participated in a regional session on Essential Elements, where they presented their work during the pilot to other boards in the area. Information from all the pilot boards, including HWDSB, was also shared provincially. Locally, the pilot has helped to focus the Section 23 educational programs in the key areas of instruction and assessment, in closer alignment to the activities occurring in regular classroom settings.

### 2009-10 Directions

The 2009-2010 CTC School Improvement Plan was created based on data collected through the gap analysis and focus for improvement exercises completed by CTC teachers by Learning Communities. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) provides the focus for this year for teachers to improve implementation of specific Essential Elements.

The areas included in the SIP are:

- Ongoing assessment and evaluation to provide information on the level of achievement in literacy and numeracy (Elementary Treatment);
- Primary focus of instruction on literacy and numeracy (Elementary Treatment);
- Transition plans developed and monitored by multidisciplinary teams (Elementary Treatment);
- Appropriate learning resources available to students (Corrections);
- Appropriate documentation maintained and kept in the OSR (Corrections);
- Students participation in board and government sponsored tests/assessments (Care);
- Teacher access to professional development activities provided by the board and/or partner facility (Secondary Treatment); and
- The use of accommodations, modifications and/or alternative programming reflected in the students' education plans (all Learning Communities).

The development and implementation of education plans is a major focus and a highlight of the SIP for all Learning Communities.

# APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS TRAINING

## 2008-09 Program:

In compliance with PPM 140, Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a number of system training sessions were offered to staff working with students with ASD (and also students with other behavioural concerns). Training focused on:

- introduction to autism;
- assessment and evaluation;
- increasing positive behaviours;
- teaching new skills;
- maintaining behaviours;
- generalizing or transferring behaviours; and/or
- restricting or narrowing conditions under which behaviour occurs.

Along with system training opportunities, staff were provided with individual consultations and coaching sessions with the HWDSB ASD team, Geneva Centre for Autism, and McMaster Children's Hospital—School Support Program ASD.

## 2008-09 Results:

- Partnerships were forged with McMaster Children's Hospital—School Support Program ASD, the Geneva Centre for Autism and the HWDSB ASD team to support students with ASD.
- 260 staff attended system workshops on:
  - Introduction to ASD;
  - The Hidden Curriculum in Developing Social Skills for Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder;
  - Understanding Emotional Self-Regulation in Students with ASD;
  - Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills;
  - Sex in the City and Asperger Syndrome; and
  - Autism Spectrum Disorders: Approaches to Understanding and Addressing Behaviour.
- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) instructional practices were offered to school based learning teams.
- As part of the Ministry of Education initiative to train educational assistants who work with students with ASD, the Geneva Centre for Autism provided to the Educational Assistants the third in a series of workshops. This full-day session was specifically on ABA.
- The incorporation of ABA principles into the IEP was examined as part of the IEP Review process.
- The Ministry of Education surveyed schools to determine the outcome of implementation of PPM 140 and ABA principles.
- Psychological Services Consultants were assigned to support students with ASD.
- Additional staff were hired through Ministry ASD initiatives.
- Staff explored the teaching technique known as Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACCH). TEACCH is an evidence-based approach to educating students with ASD. It has been extremely successful in international educational environments.
- The ASD team was the winner of the Council for Exceptional Children's Educational Team of the Year award.

## 2009-10 Directions:

The implementation of ABA instructional practices will continue to be an area of focus for students with ASD. As well, as it is evidence based, we will incorporate ABA principles as we develop programming for students with various special needs. Continued partnerships will be developed with our community partners to support students with autism. TEACCH will be introduced to a number of schools during the 2009/10 school year.

# SECONDARY SPECIAL CLASS STRUCTURE

## 2008-09 Program:

The Secondary Special Classes will be examined to determine:

- the abilities of the students in each class;
- the exceptionalities served in each class;
- the specific program and curriculum needs; and
- any changes necessary to provide for increased student success.

## 2008-09 Results:

Secondary special classes located in HWDSB secondary schools are divided into three categories:

- Developmental Classes;
- Autism Classes;
- Comprehensive Classes.

An examination of the classes indicated that students attending the Developmental and Autism classes are more apt to have similar strengths and needs than in the Comprehensive classes, where students have a variety of exceptionalities. Although all classes contain many quality elements and appropriate student-centred programming, programs are not necessarily aligned across the district, nor are they necessarily structured in relation to the pillars of the secondary Student Success initiative. A pilot project was undertaken in one Comprehensive class to determine the benefits of an increased focus on assistive technology as an instructional practice. Discussions have begun on specific program elements, to provide additional targeted resource assistance and to increase the alignment with Student Success.

## 2009-10 Directions:

Further consultation with various stakeholders will continue. The technology pilot project will be reviewed and assessed. Pilot projects will be undertaken in both Developmental and Comprehensive classes.

The Comprehensive Class program pilot will focus on providing:

- a stronger connection for the students to the standard secondary program by focussing on the Pillars of Student Success – Literacy; Numeracy; Pathways; Community, Culture, and Caring;
- a clearer alignment with students' strengths and learning styles;
- a stronger connection with the workplace destinations for the students; and
- a greater connection for staff working in these classes across the district.

The Developmental Class program pilot will examine the benefits of a 2 class model, as students in these programs generally remain in the school system longer than 4 years. The classes would serve two purposes, but work collaboratively together on programs:

- Class 1: Developmental Services – Secondary Program – Gr. 9 – 12; ; and
- Class 2: Developmental Services – Transitions Program – Years 1,2, 3.

Both programs would focus on the Pillars of Student Success—Literacy; Numeracy; Pathways; Community, Culture, and Caring. However, the transition program would also focus on transitions, and making connections with the receiving community destinations for the students.

Opportunities will be provided for secondary special class teachers to connect as a professional learning community to further the development of programming elements specific to this population.

# RESOURCE MEETING STRUCTURE

## **2008-09 Program:**

The structure of School/System Resource Meetings was examined to determine any necessary revisions needed to provide specific system support to schools while making the effective use of the time allotted.

## **2008-09 Results:**

Information was gathered and collated from both system and school-based staff regarding the current structure of System Resource Meetings (SRMs). The feedback generally indicated that, while often effective, the SRM process was applied quite differently across schools in the system, with varying degrees of involvement from system support staff. Two summer writing teams generated thoughtful draft documents that will provide a springboard for future conversations about meeting students' needs.

In the fall of 2006, the Ministry of Education announced funding for an initiative called the *OPA Student Assessment Project*. The OPA project permitted the funded opportunity to pilot a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of service delivery. The goals of the HWDSB pilot were to implement the critical aspects of the RTI approach in a Canadian context. E-BEST will be assisting in an evaluation of the project.

The RTI approach incorporates the guiding principles of *Education for All, K-6* which are sustained in the draft document *Learning for All, K-12*. RTI permits teachers to systematically implement and monitor a tiered model of literacy instruction in primary classrooms that addresses the needs of students at all levels of achievement. RTI brings an early intervention focus, frequent monitoring, and strategically employed, increasingly intensive interventions for students continuing to experience difficulties.

With the completion of a two-year, Response to Intervention (RTI) pilot at 4 schools, a tremendous amount of knowledge about this approach in the context of our school practices has been acquired. "*Response to Intervention Implementation Guide*" is a detailed implementation manual capturing the various aspects that need to be considered in starting RTI in a school.

In Year Two of implementation of the RTI approach, there was enhanced emphasis on the tiered interventions that are essential for strengthening student achievement. Preliminary findings suggest that positive changes were evident for students in RTI schools (i.e., enhanced oral reading fluency, stronger grade three EQAO results). There were no changes to reading attitudes, and DRA results for RTI schools were in line with those of matched comparison schools. School teams and consultants were very positive about the RTI approach, much more so than in focus groups after year one. They have seen the benefits for staff and students and are hopeful that implementation will continue.

A multidisciplinary, summer writing team was charged with the task of incorporating exemplary elements of the SRM and RTI processes within existing resources to produce a service delivery model which resulted in the document entitled "*A Proposal for: Tiered Response Model for Student Achievement*".

## **2009-10 Directions:**

Both documents ("*Response to Intervention Implementation Guide*" and "*A Proposal for: Tiered Response Model for Student Achievement*") will be viewed and vetted together as companion documents. These documents will be shared with key stakeholders, principals and others in order to obtain reaction, input and insights. They will serve to ignite discussion and possibly debate about how to improve our service so that students can reach their full potential.

## ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

### Special Education – Professional Development at Glenwood Special Day School

It is hoped that Glenwood Day School can become a “centre” or “gathering place” for special class teachers to network and participate in professional development programs, such that teachers will be strengthened and supported in their program development, and lead to improved student achievement. In this forum strategies and new learning will be shared, and staff will be encouraged and enriched in their professional experiences.

Programs offered over the past year to which system staff have been invited include sessions on:

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder;
- ASD and Sexuality (presented by the Chedoke Team);
- Special Class Numeracy Kits;
- First Class Teacher Resources;
- Workshop for Occasional Teachers;
- Panel Presentation (question and answer) with Kinesiologist, Communication Disorders Assistant, Developmental Specialist, Educational Assistant and Teacher (each member spoke about their role, programs and the students served at Glenwood);
- Presentation of the Special Education Life Skills Manual; and
- Visits to Glenwood Classroom to meet and talk to teachers (brief description of students, their needs and program, kinds of goals/objectives, and challenges for students and staff .

### Connections for Students: Supporting Seamless Transitions from the Autism Intervention Program to School

In February 2009, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Child and Youth announced an exciting pilot for 16 Boards of Education in Ontario. The project’s goal is to improve outcomes for students with ASD and their families as they transition from Intensive Behaviour Intervention (IBI) to school. HWDSB was one of the 16 boards chosen to participate in the pilot project. A project lead was appointed to work collaboratively with Hamilton Health Sciences—Autism Intervention Program and the School Support Program—ASD. A framework is being developed and evaluated during the 2009/10 school year.

### Making It KLLIC!

Research has demonstrated a strong and lasting relationship between oral language development and literacy skills. The Making It KLLIC! (Kindergarten Language and Literacy in the Classroom) collaborative program continues to be offered to kindergarten teachers in order to increase teacher capacity in teaching language and early literacy skills in order to help students succeed at meeting curriculum demands.

Making it KLLIC! Kits were made available to teachers through the Media Net lending library in order to increase the number of classrooms and students who could benefit from this program in addition to the ongoing traditional method of delivery involving demonstration by and collaboration with speech-language pathologists. Longitudinal research results indicated improved results on EQAO testing for students who participated in the Making it KLLIC! program in their SK year, especially for students attending high needs schools. A joint summer writing project resulted in the creation of Read-a-Louds for kindergarten teachers to complement the Making it KLLIC! program books.

The Making it KLLIC program will be expanded to more schools throughout the Board this year, particularly in high needs schools, as these are the students that the research revealed benefited greatly from the explicit teaching of language and early literacy skills.

### Phonological Awareness

Class Act Phonological Awareness Kits were developed in order to serve small groups of students who require more assistance to develop critical early literacy and meta-linguistic skills. The kits were developed and provided to Grade One Speech and Language Program classes and to schools who participated in the Response to Intervention (1RTI) pilot project. A Smart Board version was created to provide more interactive activities for whole class participation. A number of Class Act Phonological Awareness kits will be placed in the Media Net lending library for teachers and speech-language pathologists to access. The number of kits available to use will be expanded. A CD will be made available for schools to make their own kits.

### **Enhanced Bridge Reading Kits**

Students who have extremely limited or no use of verbal language often do not learn to read using traditional methods. Enhanced Bridge Reading Kits were created using the Bridge reading program and Match Select Name strategies. Explicit structured reading programs based on strong language development and current research began the development stage.

Several sets of the Enhanced Bridge Reading kits were created in order to have them available to lend to school staff involved with students who require these materials and techniques. The kits contain books, practice materials and tracking forms, through 27 levels. Individual students have exhibited excellent progress in their reading skills. At this time they have been used for students on the Augmentative and Alternative Communication Team caseload, however, there has been recognition of the success of this strategy and demand for these materials for other students in the system. Preliminary use of the first 5 lessons of the explicit structured reading program was favourable. The hands-on interactive nature of the lessons increased students' reading skills.

The number of Enhanced Bridge Reading kits available through the Media Net lending library will be expanded in order to have one set available for special classes and a printable version available on the First Class site for classes that already have a copy of the Bridge Reading program. Explicit structured reading programs based on strong language development and current research will continue to be developed.

### **Hands On Numeracy Kits**

Hands On Numeracy Kits (based on Teaching Math to Hands On Learners-D. Horstmeier) were created in order to support students who are hands-on learners. The kits covered all areas of the math curriculum and included all of the material, observation and tracking forms as well as IEP goals.

The Hands on Numeracy kits were made available through the Media Net lending library. A printable version is also available on the First Class site. These kits were presented through a number of inservices and presentations to learning resource teachers, special class teachers, and educational assistants. The next level of Numeracy Kits will be created and the number of existing kits will be expanded due to the high demand.

### **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**

There are demands for standardized augmentative and alternative communication materials for students with special needs both in the special education classroom and in integrated classes. Special class augmentative/alternative communication kits were created in order for teachers to have standardized, hands on and practical materials for their classrooms. The kits contain assessment and observation materials, programming materials, and references as well as question portfolios and classroom strategies. A printable version is available on the First Class website.

Grade 1 to 3 augmentative/ alternative communication kits were created in order to respond to the high demand for standardized materials for students integrated into regular classrooms. The kits contain visual and classroom supports for use by teachers and staff within the classroom. Visual routine schedules are used in many classrooms with increasing requests from kindergartens.

Special class kits were provided to teachers of developmentally delayed, multiple, and comprehensive classes at inservices with follow-up classroom visits available. The grade 1 to 3 kits were provided to regular classroom teachers who had students requiring augmentative or alternative methods of communication in their classes.

The Augmentative and Alternative Communication Team, in partnership with the Program Effectiveness Department, provided all kindergarten classrooms with visual routine schedules and trained staff on how to use them in their classrooms. All of the visuals are available on the First Class site. Visits to classrooms throughout the system indicate that most classrooms are using these routine schedules.

In 2009-2010, classroom visits will be available to special class teachers in order to support the use of the materials in the special class kits. Further strategies and materials will be created in response to teacher input. The number of grade 1 to 3 kits and training to staff will be increased.

## **Mental Health Services**

### 1. Consultation: McMaster Children's Hospital, Child and Youth Mental Health Program Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS)

As a result of a new partnership with McMaster Children's Hospital Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Services initiated during the 2008-2009 school year, the hospital is providing 4 hours per month of on-site clinical consultation service to HWDSB with the following intention:

- promoting access to scarce and specialized clinical resources;
- building capacity across the system; and
- working collaboratively with the current systems in place at the school board.

The service provides a comprehensive mental health assessment for individual students that includes the student, his/her guardian and school personnel. Client consent is required as well as a referral from the family doctor. Each consultation takes approximately two hours.

Following the consultation, a detailed summary is forwarded to the family's physician and to the HWDSB staff who made the consultation request, if consent has been obtained from the student and family. Provision of ongoing psychiatric / clinical service to individual clients is determined at the discretion of the Regional CYMHS consultant and includes provision for ongoing service coordination with the physician and the HWDSB staff to ensure integrated treatment planning across services.

Students will continue to be mainly elementary, and referred via the Character Networks programs, however secondary referrals will be considered, particularly students involved in the Gateway program (note: students over the age of 13 must consent to treatment). In 2008-09, 8 students and their families participated in the assessments conducted by the CYMHS. Feedback has been very positive from families and Board personnel.

### 2. Mental Health & Addiction Consultation to School Boards, Coordinated by the Cleghorn Clinic: St. Joseph's Hospital

A consultation committee comprised of professional staff from the HWDSB/HWCDB and local mental health service providers meet on a monthly basis to discuss students/families who are presenting as in need of mental health and addiction support services. The goals of the consultation process are:

- to provide information and support to school social workers with regard to mental health and addictions system navigation; and
- to help build the capacity of school social workers to support students with mental health issues through clinical consultation.

In 2008-09, 6 situations were presented to the Mental Health & Addiction Consultation to School Boards' consultation committee.

### 3. Referral to Dr. Pauline Pytka

Dr. Pytka provides consultation services to HWDSB regarding students whom we think may have psychiatric issues or at least severe behavioural difficulties where we have exhausted all of our resources. She does not provide therapy/treatment or on-going consultation. Rather, she will provide insight and recommendations. 12 children were presented to Dr. Pytka during 2008-09.

All three of the above services will continue in the upcoming school year. Additional students will be seen as the programs will be up and running for the entire year.

## **SALEP**

### **2008-2009 Program:**

Under the authority of the **Education Act** and **Regulation 308**, a committee is established to consider applications made by guardians to have their compulsory school age children participate in supervised alternative learning programs. The alternative program could consist of work, work skills, life skills, alternative learning experiences, volunteer work and/or any other activity considered to be "directed towards the pupil's needs and interests". The pupil would thus be excused from attendance at school either full or part-time. Regular contact with the pupil is maintained by the program teacher or another designated staff member who is employed with the school board.

### **2008-2009 Results:**

- 158 students attended the SALEP Centre during 2008/2009;
- 84 students returned to their home secondary school after completing SALEP;
- 37 transitioned to Alternative Education settings;
- 37 students returned to SALEP.

Students attending SALEP identified the following as contributing to poor attendance:

- 43 students presented with internalizing behaviours (depression, anxiety, etc.);
- 39 students presented with externalizing behaviours (anger, attention, etc.);
- 40 students presented with social and peer difficulties;
- 7 students presented with issues related to bereavement;
- 53 students presented with issues related to divorce/separation; and
- 72 students presented with issues related to family distress.

144.5 credits were granted and 13.5 partial credits were granted over the 2008-09 school year.

The current SALEP model pre-dates the Learning to 18 initiative, as well as Student Success initiatives, and the increased focus on transitions. The SALEP Centre was the program choice for those students, aged 14 and 15, that were on the verge of exiting formal education. As such, the goal was to assist these students in preparing for entry into the workforce. At the current time, many of these students are required to be re-integrated back into their home secondary school. Students who meet the criteria for Alternative Education and Student Success programming have been seen to transition successfully from the SALEP Centre. Students who have transitioned back into their home secondary school have not fared as well, as once removed from the home school environment it is difficult for them to reintegrate. Also, students attending the SALEP Centre do not earn as many credits as in the home school setting and thus the student must transition back with fewer credits than their peers.

Recognizing the need to evolve, the SALEP Centre has begun a move back to the original intent of the legislation: an emphasis on work skills, life skills, alternative learning experiences, volunteer work and/or any other activity considered to be “directed towards the pupil’s needs and interests”. Two significant recommendations are being put forth for the school year 2009-2010. The first being that in-school options and supports should be exhausted prior to a student applying to the SALEP Committee. Attendance at secondary school needs to be tried first, otherwise the student does not develop any “school connectedness”. The second recommendation is to have the SALEP Committee hearing prior to the student attending the Centre. The past practice has been for the student to attend the Centre on a trial basis prior to being presented in front of the committee. The rationale for the change is the belief that the contract signed at the Committee meeting can clearly outline the responsibilities of all the parties. This will result in increased accountability for all stakeholders. Students who are not successful at the Centre may return before the Committee to assess whether they are suitable candidates for the program. In addition, system staff with responsibility for alternative placements within HWDSB will continue to work together to align the entry process into these programs, such that students are placed in the program that best addresses their individual needs.

### **Special Education Parent Handbook**

During the 2007-08 school year, a SEAC sub-committee developed a revised parent handbook, entitled “Working Together: A Guide to Special Education / Student Services”. During the 2008-09 school year, SEAC applied for a regional Parent Reaching Out grant, and received funding to have the handbook translated into other languages. Copies of the handbook are being printed in English, Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, and Chinese. These will also be made available electronically on the board website.

### **Special Education Professional Development Day: May 1st 2009**

Special Education / Student Services, in collaboration with other departments and community partners, provided professional development opportunities to HWDSB staff on May 1st 2009. A variety of workshops, based on feedback from schools, were provided. Participants received a classroom resource on Differentiated Instruction.

Workshops included:

The Aboriginal Learner; Addiction; Alternative Education; ASD; Asperger’s Syndrome; Assistive Technology; Augmentative Communication; Behaviour Management Systems Training; Childhood Anxiety; Classroom Behaviour Management; Community Services; DI and Math; DI and the Smart Board; DI in Kindergarten; Down Syndrome; eLearning; English Language Learners; Fetal Alcohol Syndrome; Gifted; IEPs; Interactive Phonological Awareness; Learning Disabilities; Mental Health and Adolescents; Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training; Occupational Therapy; OSR Search; Understanding Psychological Reports; Mild Intellectual Disabilities; Section 23; Students Experiencing Domestic Violence; Supporting Oral Communication Skill Development.