BACKGROUND

This is a project that is supported by the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, the Ontario Ministry of Education and Queens University, the Assessment and Evaluation Group.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The 3 guiding questions by the evaluation team were:

1. How might collaborative implementation of an instructional rounds model support the use of assessment for learning (Afl) practices in classrooms and amongst teachers and principals?
2. What is the impact of this professional learning program on developing a collaborative culture of learning that values assessment for learning?
3. How might teachers’ use of assessment for learning in their classrooms influence the quality of student learning and specifically self-regulation skills?

FINDINGS

Teacher Reflections:
Teachers articulated changes in both their professional practice and students’ learning and achievement after effectively implementing an assessment for learning culture in their classrooms. Summarized below are some of their key observations and learnings throughout the process.

Teachers observed…
- students having learning conversations without teacher involvement, highlighting their growing ownership of their own learning.
- students taking greater care in their work because they collaborated and co-created success criteria.
- students giving and receiving feedback more effectively based on learning goals and success criteria.
- students talking about their progress, identifying what was done correctly, providing and integrating feedback, and then addressing areas for improvement.

Teachers learned…
- they were becoming more self-critical, thoughtful, and flexible in their instructional practice.
- more teaching time was being used to provide opportunities for peer/self/teacher feedback, discussing learning goals, and co-creating success criteria.
- that there was still much to learn, that they were at different places in their learning, and recognized the value in observing teachers at different levels of the Afl integration.
- that they must “learn the work by doing the work.”

Principal Reflections:
Principals articulated changes in their schools’ learning cultures as well as in the learning culture across the board. Summarized below are some of their key observations and learnings throughout the process.

Principals observed…
- that there were learning conversations happening between teachers across different schools who were part of the project, suggesting that the cultural shift occurring in their schools was spreading to other schools contributing to a learning culture across the board.
- they were engaging in more purposeful observations when visiting teachers’ classroom, as they were looking for evidence that Afl practices had been embedded in the learning environment.
Principals learned…

- that there were not only co-learners in the process with their teachers, but also co-facilitators of professional learning within their school around AfL beliefs.
- that both formal and informal communications with teachers became more data-based and grounded in evidence of student learning as a result of the Building Capacity in Assessment for Learning (BCAfL) project.

OVERALL FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Data were collected throughout the BCAfL project to support on-site program development and results. There were significant findings. The recommendations represented the next steps in the 2014-2015 project to be considered in the planning process by Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, the Ministry of Education and Queens University.

Findings:

1. Instructional rounds increases AfL knowledge, skills and practices.
2. The BCAfL project has resulted in “pockets of learning cultures” with respect to AfL, and these pockets are likely the necessary first steps toward a more systematic AfL culture within a school or across the board.
3. The intended goals and impacts of the BCAfL will take time before measurable shifts in practice and outcomes can be realized in the classroom, the school, and the board.

Recommendations:

1. Keep the curricular focus of AfL relatively narrow since it is more challenging to explore emerging AfL practices across subject areas.
2. Revise the instructional rounds process to use the conversations from descriptive observations as a peer-feedback and self-assessment method to inform future practice and learning.
3. Develop a long-term strategy that encourages other teachers and principals to learn about AfL along with a communication strategy to disseminate information about AfL.
4. The leadership team should move aspects of the BCAfL project forward to the “next level” to include teacher practice that moves from learning goals and success criteria to peer and self-assessment, practice that better supports struggling learners and those achieving at Levels 1 and 2.
5. The BCAfL project should continue to support teachers’ reflective practice.
6. Provide principals with alternative learning opportunities with respect to AfL-informed leadership.
7. Create a learning culture that becomes a natural part of the processes and practices amongst educators rather than a series of events that teachers and principals attend.