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# Teacher Collaborative Inquiry Projects 2013-2014

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External Coach -  
Summary

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Again this year Teacher Collaborative Inquiry projects were well received within each of the school districts that are a part of the Ottawa Region Professional Network Centre.

### **Who was involved?**

This year there were 11 TCI projects within 9 school boards.

- 55% were Elementary (K-8)
- 9% were secondary
- 36% were cross panel projects.

Within the 11 projects over 50 schools were involved, as well as dozens of teachers and thousands of students.

### **What were inquiry projects?**

While there continued to be a range of projects this year, the focus shifted towards math, and student wellness and regulation. For the first time, math projects outnumbered literacy-based projects, and student wellness and self-regulation became a focus.

### **What sources of data were used?**

Again this year multiple sources of data were used, including:

- Agendas & minutes from inquiry team meetings
- Teacher's journals/reflections
- Student journals
- Results of moderated marking of tasks
- Student and teacher surveys
- Teacher focus group conversations/interviews
- Classroom observations (e.g. photos, notes etc.)
- Student work (e.g. artifacts, photos etc.)
- Scores on external assessments (e.g. EQAO)
- Exit cards completed by students.

Teams continue to use a variety of data collection methods but the shift towards more qualitative sources continues. The majority of teams use both quantitative and qualitative data. Teams continue to search for methods to quantify their qualitative results, or find ways to report large sets of qualitative data.

### **How did teams use the External Coach?**

This year was the first year that one external coach has supported all boards in the region. Once again Upper Canada opted out of support by the external coach and instead chose to support their project internally.

The initial contact with most teams took place at the Orientation session in October in Ottawa. Two teams did reach out prior to that session to discuss their ideas and make sure they were on the “right track”. Renfrew County District School Board did not attend the fall orientation session and initial contact was not made until later. Following the orientation session emails were sent to the identified project/team leads introducing the external coach and providing contact information. From there, in addition to ongoing communication with several teams, monthly emails were sent to team leads to “check in” and offer assistance/ask for updates. When possible, in-person visits were made with each project, either with the team, or with the team lead (8 visits for seven projects). When it was not possible to meet in person due to scheduling or logistics a phone conference was scheduled (two districts), or detailed email communication took place to respond to detailed questions that arose (with one district). Approximately 240 email correspondences took place regarding the MISA projects with teams or members.

### Reflections on the Process:

Session	Reflections
Orientation	This session was an important time to meet teams, get contact information, and work on the questions or area of focus. The time to collaborate in teams and establish criteria for the report as well as guidelines helps to ensure everyone is “on the same page”. As an external coach, this session is helpful especially with new teams or those who have not participated before to make contact and start to build relationships with team members.
Midpoint Session	<p>Team members appreciated the keynote speaker and chance to come together to discuss their progress on the project. During the afternoon session, several of the teams used the opportunity to plan for their final report (e.g. determine and divide up tasks). One challenge to the midpoint session was that because there were three different workshops taking place in the afternoon sessions, some teams were divided between the three rooms. If the team lead was not in the room for TCI, it made it difficult for remaining team members to move forward with their project. When full teams were present the afternoon session was useful as a planning session.</p> <p>The Midpoint Session also provided an opportunity to review criteria and answer questions on the requirements and process for the display and final report.</p>
Final Symposium	The final symposium is always seen as a celebration of the work that has taken place through the year. The display board encourages teams to pull together all the pieces for their project which makes it easier to write the final report (e.g. there are several emails and phone calls with questions leading up to the symposium, but less leading up to the final report. Teams appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their own projects, but also learn from the work of others. Many teams leave with questions for next year. Several teams asked how they can continue to receive funding for their work, and often teachers ask how the topics for inquiries are determined.

### Estimated Number of Schools, Teachers, and Students Involved

When possible, number of schools, teachers, and students has been included below. Information was gathered from final reports so is not complete.

Board	Employees	Schools	Students (approximate)
ALCDSB <b>Closing the Gap Through Self-Regulation in FDELK Classrooms</b>	5 teachers 5 ECE	5	5 classes
CDSBEO <b>Examining the Evidence of Student Achievement in Intermediate Math</b>	15 Educators (estimated)	5 (?)	Focus on Grade 9 students
HPEDSB #1 <b>Google Apps for Education – Exploring the Potential of Cloud-Based Technologies.</b>	18 teachers	11 schools (2 schools highlighted)	600 +
HPEDSB #2 <b>Social-Emotional Learning using the ‘Mind-Up’ Approach.</b>	All staff (including appropriate support staff)	2	2 schools
Limestone #1 <b>Mark it UP!</b>	17	4	250
Limestone #2 <b>Engaging adolescent learners (grade 7/8) in History/Geography by teaching through an inquiry based program.</b>	8	3	150
Ottawa Carleton District School Board <b>Building Teacher Content Knowledge to Close the Gap in Mathematics</b>	Multiple	Grade 3 and 6 classes	
Ottawa Catholic School Board <b>Examining Mindset in Mathematics</b>	31 educators	1 to 3 students observed on a regular basis.	
Renfrew Catholic District School Board <b>School Effectiveness: Full Day Kindergarten: Inquiry beyond Kindergarten: More frequent use of HOT (Higher Order Thinking) Mentor Texts.</b>	7 teachers	7 classes	Approximately 140 students

Renfrew County District School Board <b>iPossibilities Project: Supporting Inclusion, Engagement, and Achievement for Students using iDevices</b>	7 teachers	7 schools	Approximately 150 students
Upper Canada District School Board <b>Making Student Thinking Visible</b>	5 teachers 2 administrators	3 primary 1 junior	Approximately 150 students

### Recommendations for Future TCI Projects.

Through conversations with team members and observations of the process, recommendations can be made.

1. Continue with the orientation session that encourages some teams to meet for the first time and allows everyone to have an overview of TCI as well as the process.
2. Have a midpoint session but offer it earlier than April. Holding the session in February would allow teams to focus more on the process of collaboration than simply planning for the final report.
3. For the midpoint session – if more than one initiative is attending, structure the day so that key players (such as team leaders) do not have to choose between initiatives.
4. Provide opportunities for cross-board collaboration and sharing. Teams appreciate networking.
5. Continue to provide samples of past TCI projects so new participants have a sense of what is involved.
6. Continue to share tips about the “process of collaboration” and how teams have collaborated effectively.
7. Continue to offer support with all phases of the process, from proposal writing to survey/measure development, data analysis and report writing.
8. Offer a session on qualitative analysis - a process that is new for some team members.
9. Ensure the external coach or support receives copies of all proposals and final reports.
10. Include a section on the final report for “Estimated # of teachers involved, Estimated # of schools, Estimated # of students”.
11. With such variation in the final report, suggest a bit more structure especially around the method (how they did what they did) to allow others to replicate the project.