



**HOLD THE DATE!**  
Next Stakeholder Symposium  
**March 4, 2010**  
McMaster University, Hamilton

## Stakeholder Newsletter

November, 2009

The *Partnering for Change* Demonstration Project is well underway! The Pilot Study conducted in the 2008-09 school year was extremely successful and we have many updates to share with you. As always, we encourage you to circulate this newsletter to anyone who may be interested in the study.

### **Pilot Study Completed**

Thirty five students and families participated formally in the Pilot Project. In addition, the Occupational Therapists (OTs) reached hundreds of students in each school through provision of full class lessons and education to many teachers. Nearly all of the primary division teachers in each school requested support and participation of the OT in their classrooms. Most teachers also engaged in regular “lunch ‘n learn” educational sessions offered by the OTs on topics that were requested by the teachers.

In May of 2009 we held focus groups at the two pilot schools, Hawthorne Village and Oakwood Public School. Over 25 teachers, SERTs, LRTs and administrators participated voluntarily in four focus groups and provided us with valuable feedback. Here are a few representative quotes:

*“Some kids just need a few little things – they would never be entitled to that support because they’re not bad enough - before they get really bad further on in the grades, you can do a few little things to really, really help them along”*

*“Some things don’t come in a hurry, and that’s why this model is so much better because it’s teaching us.....I’ve had lots of kids that see OTs but I’ve never had an OT in my classroom.....they just do their thing and leave a piece of paper and that’s all that really happens, so this [model] is way better.”*

*“This whole model has helped teachers become more involved in the process of helping the kids.....with [OT] coming in and working, we got more knowledge about what she was doing with the kids. We were able to reinforce things by having her in the classroom teaching us, giving us the resources and knowledge we needed to address the concerns.”*

*“The three kids in my class that the OT has worked with this year, - two of them I’ve had for three years, because I taught them in kindergarten, and you only see little progressions when they were in JK and SK.....but once the OT worked with them.....they’re confident, they’ll actually go to their desk and sit down and try whereas before the one would go curl up in a ball on the carpet and refuse to do anything, he would try to write, then crumple it up in a ball and throw it in the garbage. Now he can write and now he can read his writing and I can read his writing and his parents can and he’s just ecstatic about the whole thing!”*

*“I think we’re comfortable now talking to parents about it [coordination difficulties], whereas before the piece of paper that went home in their agendas, you never knew if parents actually*

*read it.....especially in our community, we have parents who might not read it or pay attention to it, so now we can take the knowledge we have learned and speak directly with the parents.”*

During the Pilot Phase we identified aspects of this model of service delivery that involved new learning or novel experiences for our pilot OTs. We then began to gather resources at the two pilot schools that could be used for training OTs in the Demonstration Project. For example, we video taped Sandra teaching a scissor session to a Kindergarten class and a cursive session to a Grade 3 class. A kindergarten teacher graciously offered to videotape her taking us on a tour of her classroom, explaining the rationale behind many of the activity centres and the classroom layout. This teacher also asked if she could be videotaped expressing her strong support for this model and she encouraged future teachers to give it a try!

In the summer, Community Rehab identified seven OTs who were interested in learning about and implementing this new model in a number of schools within our partner schoolboard, the Halton District School Board (HDSB). OTs who volunteered to participate in the study shadowed one of our pilot OTs, Sandra Sahagian-Whalen, at Hawthorne Village Public School in order to see what a typical day in a school might be like. After spending a day at the school, one of the OTs sent the following email:

*“I really enjoyed the orientation day! Although, it was hectic and really busy, I left feeling like we had accomplished so much in that one day alone. We had to think on our feet, and Sandi's schedule for the day was thrown out the window from the first bell, but it was the most rewarding day I have had at a school in a long time! I am so excited to be involved with this project and I see so much potential in this type of model. This is what we SHOULD be doing as OTs in the schools.....I only hope the results prove to everyone that a change in services is required, and the best way to do that is to include the OT right in the heart of a school so consultative services can be effective.....”*

### **Demonstration Project Planning**

As we wrapped up the Pilot Study and began to plan the Demonstration Project, we encountered a major funding challenge. As the stakeholders will recall, this is a Partnership Grant which means that the Pilot Project and the research components of the Demonstration Project were funded by peer-reviewed research grants. The health services delivered by OTs in the Demonstration Project, however, were to be funded by one of our partners, the Mississauga-Halton CCAC. Given the current fiscal situation and changes to the way school health caseloads were managed at the MH-CCAC, our partner was unable to commit the full amount of funds, as anticipated. Fortunately, the superintendents of HDSB and the Coordinator of Research and Accountability at the school board have been very supportive and were able to commit some funds to ensure that the project went ahead. Other partners, including Community Rehab, also contributed “in kind” or actual funds so we have been able to proceed nearly as planned. Thank you to all for your commitment to seeing this project through and evaluating the applicability of this model of service delivery in multiple schools.

The research team submitted a proposal for the 2009-2010 Demonstration Project and received ethics approval from McMaster University and the HDSB for this phase of the study. The research team also developed measures of teacher knowledge about children with motor

challenges. With the help of Heather Gataveckas (Coordinator of Research and Accountability, HDSB), an on-line questionnaire was distributed to all teachers in the HDSB. A more detailed teacher knowledge questionnaire was sent out to teachers in the schools participating in the project in 2009-2010. A follow up questionnaire will be sent to all teachers in the participating schools in Fall 2010.

In September, we held a half day training session for the Demonstration Project OTs to orient them to the new model and the research project. An on-line collaborative consultation training course was developed by Danielle Levac and the research team, who worked closely with the pilot OTs to determine content and focus. The training course involves 8 modules that the OTs are now working through during the 2009-2010 school year. These modules include readings, video clips, case scenarios, activities/tasks and an opportunity to have on-line group discussions that are facilitated. Once we receive feedback from the Demonstration OTs and revise the modules, they will potentially be available in the future to orient other OTs to this model of service delivery.

### **Demonstration Project Begins**

In mid-October, 7 OTs began to implement this model in 8 schools across 4 regions (Acton, Georgetown, Milton and Oakville) of the board. Two more schools will be added in the next month. Peer support meetings are held monthly with Nancy Pollock, Sandra and all OTs involved in the Demonstration Project in order to share ideas, identify successes and challenges and to work together to find solutions to any barriers that emerge. Sandra is available to mentor the OTs and makes regular on-site visits to the schools to assist OTs with questions about the model. She, Nancy and the research team are also available by phone and email.

### **Symposium # 3: Save the date!**

We look forward to sharing the preliminary findings with you at our third Symposium on March 4th, 2010. This will be a working meeting from 10:00am-2:30pm (lunch provided) in which we will share preliminary findings from the Demonstration Project, including focus group feedback from the OTs who have been delivering the service. We hope you will be able to contribute your thoughts about the findings and help us identify the steps needed. We will pre-circulate workshop materials a week in advance.

Please do not hesitate to contact Cindy DeCola, Project Coordinator, at [decolac@mcmaster.ca](mailto:decolac@mcmaster.ca) or at (905) 525-9140 ext. 26074 for further information or with any comments or questions.

Thank you again for contributing your time to this exciting initiative. We look forward to continuing our partnership as we move forward with this project!



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