Title and a brief description of L4All K-12 Regional Project

The name of the 2012-13 Learning for All K-12 Regional Project is Improving the Reading Skills of At-Risk Students in Grade Two: A Collaborative Project with the Hospital for Sick Children. The main goal of this project is to improve the reading skills of poor readers in grade two. Research tells us that the earlier we can intervene to improve the skills of poor readers, the better. A seminal study in 1984 by Connie Juel, a longitudinal study which is still quoted in reading research today, underscored the importance of reaching poor readers before they enter grade 4.

Improving the reading skills of all readers in the HPEDSB is the focus of the Success for Each Student goal in the BIPSA. What we learn from this project will inform reading instruction throughout the HPEDSB. Best practices will be shared with teachers and various board staff such as coordinators and educational assistants.

The Empower Reading Program was implemented in four schools of the board during the year delivered by resource teachers in each school. The program, aimed at grade two students in the HPEDSB, was developed at the Hospital for Sick Children’s reading research department. The program focuses on the development of phonological skills and their use in reading fiction and non-fiction texts.

The project promoted inclusive practices in that the goal was to improve the reading skills of at risk readers in grade two so that they could become interested and capable participants in the grade two classroom community.

The four schools that were chosen for the project are schools that have consistently low EQAO scores in reading in their primary divisions. Resource teachers were the logical choice to deliver the program as a full hour each day is
required for delivery. Both principals and resource teachers thoroughly embraced
the program at their schools. Results were positive.

A brief description of 2011-12 and 2012-13 Teacher-Led L4All K-12 Projects
Results of the project informed the board’s BIPSAs and individual school SIPSAs. For example, results highlighted the importance of direct, clear and explicit teaching of phonological skills linked to opportunities to read authentic texts (e.g., books, smart board texts, chart stories). Results informed the instructional practices of teachers in the board in particular those who teach in the elementary panel. For example, the results of the project delineated which skills are critical to teach in order for students to have a firm foundation for learning to read. Project results also informed the purchase of effective reading materials. Project results will be/are being shared this school year through BIPSAs Learning Fair days in HPEDSB, through administrator meetings, through resource teacher meetings and through committees of the board.

Through this project an external partnership has been formed with the Hospital for Sick Children’s reading research team. Members of the team continue to mentor the resource teachers who implemented Empower Reading.

This project supports the messages in L4ALL (2011) with regard to the emphasis on improving young children’s reading skills and builds on the work of the CODE project completed in 2009-10 entitled “JK-Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies” of which the HPEDSB was an integral part.

A brief description of L4All K-12 professional learning activities
Project results have begun to be shared with a variety of stakeholders including the board of trustees, SEAC and the various departments in the board including Special Education Services and Curriculum Services in order to inform the most effective reading instruction and the BIPSAs. Messaging to the system (administrators, teachers and support staff) and the future direction of reading instruction in the board will be implemented based on feedback from presentations of the project results and on the advice of the senior team, system leaders and school improvement committees (e.g., BIPSAs planning groups) of the board.

Assessment
Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for the project. Comparative quantitative data were collected in September 2012, April 2013 and June 2013. These data showed improvement for all the students in the Empower program. Many students showed a significant improvement in their reading skills over the course of the school year.
Qualitative data were collected through attestations provided by the resource teachers at each of the four schools. These four teachers presented their qualitative findings at the spring 2013 Learning 4 All sharing opportunity in Toronto at the Ministry.

Additional Comments
HPEDSB and especially Special Education Services wish to thank the Ministry for its generosity in providing funding through Learning for All K-12 Projects. We all learned a great deal and our students benefitted immensely.