

THE SCHOOLS ATTUNED® PROGRAM

NEW YORK CITY EDUCATOR IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY

Conducted by All Kinds of Minds®
Research, Program Evaluation and Information Department
March 2005



**STATEMENT
OF
SIGNIFICANCE**

In order to help all children succeed, teachers must be skilled in modifying their instruction and implementing specific interventions based on their students' learning needs. Policy makers have begun articulating the role that ongoing professional development is expected to serve in preparing our nation's teachers for an increasingly diverse student population. The assumption is that when teachers participate in *high quality* professional development, they will then effectively implement the strategies and techniques they have learned back in their own classrooms, resulting in improved student outcomes. Program developers and school administrators are invested in the role that professional development must play in impacting teachers' classroom instruction and leading to improved student outcomes; education researchers are concerned with the forces that can influence a teacher's use of professional development experiences and his/her perceptions of the outcomes of that use on students.

The Schools Attuned® Program provides a framework for understanding how children learn and how to adapt instruction for learning differences. This program provides teachers with the knowledge base necessary to make the many instructional decisions required each day. This study is an exploration of the initial implementation of knowledge and skills gained through the Schools Attuned® Program by educators in New York City.

The goals of the Schools Attuned® Program are to strengthen educators' understanding and management of differences in learning, help educators to help students become aware of their learning profiles and improve their academic and social achievement, and create schools that respect differences in learning and nurture strengths in students. To achieve these goals, the program is designed using principles that reflect standards of professional development from the National Staff Development Council and current research on adult learning (Borasi & Fonzi (National Science Foundation), 2002; Laine & Otto (NCREL), 2000; Little, 1993; Rogers, 2002; Bransford, et al. (National Research Council), 2000).

**PROGRAM
BACKGROUND**

The Schools Attuned® Program provides a minimum of 35 instructional hours (Core Course) plus a minimum of 10 contact hours for follow-up experiences (Practicum). As a preparatory activity for the Core Course, participants select a student of their own whom they identify as struggling with learning. Participants gather observational data and work samples to bring to the program. The student becomes the participant's case student throughout the training. The program includes: (1) readings from books and articles by Dr. Levine and others, (2) content delivered through the *Developing Minds Video Library*, (3) case studies/vignettes and small group work to provide for active assimilation of content and practice of skills, (4) demonstration and practice sessions to provide opportunities to use complex information and processes simultaneously and fluidly, (5) application of these processes to participants' own case student or to a complex case student provided to them, (6) preparation for implementing the Schools Attuned® Program in the school setting, including management strategies, and (7) practicum experiences to help support implementation of the program.

METHODS

Program Evaluation is an important component of a professional development program. The purpose of the present evaluation was to examine the student outcomes that teachers report as a result of their initial use of the Schools Attuned® Program, and to explore how those reported outcomes vary according to the implementation support that teachers are provided. This report is based on results of a cross-sectional survey study.

INSTRUMENT

The **Educator Implementation Survey** was used to gather data for this study. The survey was designed to collect information on (1) how teachers have begun implementing Schools Attuned strategies and concepts in their classrooms, (2) the outcomes of that initial implementation on individual students and whole classrooms, and (3) support for implementation provided to educators by Instructional Support Specialists. Therefore, the Educator Implementation Survey gathers detailed information on implementation with individual students (and outcomes of that use), as well as implementation and outcomes of use with the whole classroom.

The Educator Implementation Survey was used to gather data from educators in New York City that had participated in the New York City District Initiative Schools Attuned Program in 2004. Recruitment emails were sent to 583 participants via their email addresses inviting them to complete an online version of the survey. A total of 713 paper surveys were then sent by mail to all non-responding participants with email addresses as a follow-up activity and to 130 participants without email addresses. A total of 226 surveys were returned for a response rate of 32%. 120 surveys were completed online, while 106 respondents completed paper surveys.

Respondents had participated in the Schools Attuned Core Course between Feb and Aug 2004 and completed 1 of 2 Practicum sessions by Dec 2004. The survey was distributed between Nov 2004 and Jan 2005. Thus Practicum session 2 had not yet occurred at the time of this survey mailing.

DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Select demographic characteristics were collected with the survey. Of the 226 respondents:

- 175 (77%) were classroom teachers, 5% were administrators, 4% were counselors, 2% were psychologists, and 12% were other specialists and support personnel;
- 90% were female;
- 70% identified themselves as Caucasian, 11% as African-American, and 12% as being of Hispanic Origin;
- 50% had more than 10 years experience in education, 23% had between 6 – 10 years experience; and
- 65% worked in K-5 settings, 31% worked in 6-12 settings.

Students with whom respondents were working included general/regular education students, special education students, English Language Learners, students mainstreamed in an inclusion setting, and students identified as 'at-risk'.

RESULTS

In this study we were interested in teachers’ reports of their initial implementation of the Schools Attuned Program, and teachers’ perceptions of the outcomes of that initial implementation and the support provided for their use. The results of this cross-sectional survey investigation follow.

EDUCATOR IMPLEMENTATION

Attuning a Student

Of the 172 teachers who reported on their implementation of Attuning a Student, 132 (77%) indicated they had begun using the process with an individual student. The table which follows provides information on the specific stages of Attuning a Student which teachers had completed or were planning to begin. Results indicate that a majority of teachers had begun implementing the specific Attuning a Student steps learned in the program.

Implementation of Attuning a Student Steps

| | Completed | Planning to Begin |
|---|-----------|-------------------|
| Noticing a Student | 86 % | 12% |
| Collection of Teacher’s View | 82 % | 13% |
| Collection of Student’s View | 78 % | 17% |
| Collection of Parent’s View | 77 % | 12% |
| Data Analysis | 66 % | 25 % |
| Profile Building | 73 % | 22 % |
| Linking Profile with School Performance | 68 % | 23 % |
| Development of Management Plan | 55 % | 34 % |
| Implementation of Management Plan | 35 % | 43 % |

**EDUCATOR
SURVEY
RESULTS**

Student Outcomes related to Attuning a Student

Teachers identified individual student outcomes that they had observed as a result of their initial use of the Attuning a Student process. Results indicate that a majority of teachers reported improvements for individual students across a variety of affective, behavioral, and academic outcomes. The table which follows provides information on the specific student improvements that teachers observed. Outcomes are organized by highest percentage of prevalence.

| Individual Student Outcomes | Observed | Did not Observe |
|---|----------|-----------------|
| | | |
| Improved Student-Teacher Interactions (n = 99) | 94 % | 6 % |
| Increased Engagement in Learning Process (n = 103) | 93 % | 7 % |
| Improved Motivation (n = 103) | 92 % | 8 % |
| Improved Self-Concept (n = 106) | 90 % | 10 % |
| Improved Awareness of Own Learning Profile (n = 103) | 89 % | 11 % |
| Improved Attitude Toward School (n = 96) | 86 % | 14 % |
| Improved Behavior (n = 83) | 84 % | 16 % |
| Improved Student Social Interactions (n = 89) | 80 % | 20 % |
| Improved Student Grades (n = 97) | 79 % | 21 % |
| Improved Parent-Teacher Interactions (n = 87) | 76 % | 24 % |

EDUCATOR SURVEY RESULTS

Whole Classroom Use of Schools Attuned

Of the 160 teachers who reported on their whole classroom use of Schools Attuned, 103 (64%) indicated they had begun implementing Schools Attuned strategies. Results indicate that teachers varied in the specific ways in which they had begun applying Schools Attuned into their whole classrooms. The table which follows provides information on the specific strategies in which teachers were engaging as a result of their Schools Attuned preparation. Strategies are organized by the highest percentage of teachers reporting use of that strategy.

| Use of Whole Classroom Strategies as a Result of Schools Attuned | Percentage of teachers using this strategy (n=103) |
|--|---|
| Differentiating Instruction | 89 % |
| Differentiating class work or homework when appropriate | 84 % |
| Promoting students' use of learning strategies | 78 % |
| Differentiating methods of assessment | 64 % |
| Linking students' work to their affinity areas | 58 % |
| Leveraging students' strengths to support their weaknesses | 52 % |
| Engaging students in learning about learning | 47 % |
| Involving parents in the implementation of management strategies at home | 37 % |
| Linking classroom activities to neurodevelopmental content | 34 % |
| Promoting a shared neurodevelopmental perspective on student learning among colleagues | 27 % |
| Utilizing Schools Attuned as a framework for parent meetings | 21 % |
| Incorporating Schools Attuned as a pre-referral procedure | 19 % |

Whole Classroom Outcomes related to Schools Attuned

Teachers identified outcomes that they had observed within their classrooms as a result of their initial use of Schools Attuned strategies. Results indicated that a majority of teachers observed a variety of whole classroom improvements linked to their use of Schools Attuned. The table which follows provides information on specific outcomes that teachers observed within their classrooms. Outcomes are organized by highest percentage of prevalence.

| Whole Classroom Outcomes | Observed | Did not Observe |
|---|-----------------|------------------------|
| Improved Student-Teacher Interactions (n = 94) | 99 % | 1 % |
| Increased Engagement in Learning Process (n = 92) | 98 % | 2 % |
| Improved Motivation (n = 95) | 96 % | 4 % |
| Improved Behavior (n = 89) | 92 % | 8 % |
| Improved Awareness of Own Learning Profiles (n = 89) | 90 % | 10 % |
| Improved Student Grades (n = 85) | 88 % | 12 % |
| Improved Student Social Interactions (n = 90) | 87 % | 13 % |
| Improved Parent-Teacher Interactions (n = 89) | 80 % | 20 % |

Teacher Outcomes related to Schools Attuned

Teachers indicated their level of agreement with the degree to which their experience in the Schools Attuned Program supported their abilities in specific skills. Results indicated that a majority of teachers agreed that their experience in Schools Attuned would support their abilities in a variety of skill areas. The table which follows provides information on these specific skills, organized by highest percentage of agreement.

| Schools Attuned Support of Specific Teacher Skills | Agreed | Did not Agree |
|--|---------------|----------------------|
| Identify students' strengths and areas in need of improvement (n = 148) | 92 % | 8 % |
| Development of strategies to enhance student learning (n = 148) | 89 % | 11 % |
| Help students understand their own learning (n = 145) | 85 % | 15 % |
| Create a climate that protects students from humiliation (n = 147) | 83 % | 17 % |
| Infuse optimism in students regarding their ability to learn (n = 143) | 83 % | 17% |
| Make instructional decisions based on neurodevelopmental knowledge (n = 144) | 82 % | 18 % |
| Communicate with parents about their child's learning (n = 145) | 79 % | 21 % |
| Collaborate with colleagues about students' learning (n = 147) | 75 % | 25 % |

School Wide Outcomes related to Schools Attuned

Respondents identified indicated their level of agreement with the degree to which the Schools Attuned Program related to broad outcomes within their schools. Respondents to these items included classroom teachers, school psychologists, counselors, IEP facilitators, administrators, and staff development specialists. The table which follows provides information on certain outcomes that respondents observed in relation to the Schools Attuned Program, organized by highest percentage of agreement.

School Wide Outcomes

| | <u>Agreed</u> | <u>Did not Agree</u> |
|---|---------------|----------------------|
| The Schools Attuned Program promotes a respect for differences and a nurturing of strengths within my school. (n = 188) | 76 % | 24 % |
| The Schools Attuned Program is a critical resource in helping my students meet academic standards. (n = 188) | 68 % | 32 % |
| The Schools Attuned Program is easily integrated with the use of other programs in my school. (n = 184) | 57 % | 43 % |
| The Schools Attuned Program has contributed to the accuracy of special education referrals in my school. (n = 176) | 52 % | 48 % |

SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Instructional Support Specialists

Educators were asked if they had met with an Instructional Support Specialist (ISS) to support their use of Schools Attuned, and if so, what services the ISS provided. Of the 154 teachers who responded to this item, only 42 (27%) indicated they had met with an ISS about their use of Schools Attuned.

Examination of the qualitative comments revealed that the most common reasons that teachers provided for not meeting with Instructional Support Specialists included:

- Not knowing what an ISS was, i.e. never having heard of the term
- Not knowing who the specific ISS was with whom they could meet
- Not having contact with a specific ISS
- Understanding that the ISS worked only with other programs
- Not having the time to initiate contact with the ISS
- Not interested in contacting the ISS

Of those that did report meeting with Instructional Support Specialists, the most noted services provided by the ISSs included:

- Consolidating and reviewing learned content
- Developing strategies
- Identifying ways for educators not in classroom to use Schools Attuned
- Providing discussion and brainstorming opportunities
- Demonstrating actual use with a student
- Providing access to additional materials

Participants' comments related to the benefits of having support from an ISS included:

Meeting with our ISS on occasion helps clear up any questions or concerns we may have along the way.

The ISS provided needed support that I was using the materials correctly and discussed further applications of using the process with a group.

Meeting with the ISS has been quite valuable because of the expertise that is brought to the table.

The support was very helpful because it allowed me the time to ask questions I had. It provided me with feedback reinforcing my new skills.

The ISS in my school is a great believer in the Schools Attuned Program, so her enthusiasm towards the program encouraged me to use it even more.

Administrative Support and Colleague Involvement

Several respondents provided comments which reflected the important roles that administrative support and colleague involvement have on teachers' implementation of the Schools Attuned Program:

This is an excellent tool to use with helping students to succeed. As an administrator it is essential to understand all of the aspects of attuning a child. Scheduling time for teachers to incorporate the attuning is crucial for this to work.

Many comments related, in particular, to the difficulties that can occur when that administrative support and colleague involvement are not present:

The Schools Attuned Program is phenomenal. However, the program is much more effective when administration "buys into" the concept and helps to promote it throughout the building.

Prior to this school year our administrators encouraged the use of Schools Attuned... The new administration does not encourage differentiating instruction; upon my return in September, there were so many changes that implementing the program was impossible.

If there were time and opportunity to collaborate, I would welcome it. I know some schools sent teams, and I think they will utilize the material better.

Although the Schools Attuned Program has many wonderful strategies to help students and teachers,....everyone needs to be trained to come aboard and institutionalize the concepts and ideology of the program.

I wish the philosophy of Schools Attuned was more widespread in my school. The team of core teachers I was trained with is really the only group that is carrying it on.

I have found the Schools Attuned workshop very helpful and informative. I would find it even more beneficial if there were more teachers at my school who attended the workshops and if my school as a whole was committed to the program. I feel like I'm trying to figure a lot of it out on my own.

This study examined the initial implementation of the Schools Attuned Program by 226 educators in New York City. Detailed information was collected on teachers' use of Schools Attuned with individual students as well as in their whole classrooms:

- 77% of teachers had begun the Attuning a Student process with an individual student, 64% had begun using Schools Attuned strategies with their whole classroom.

When teachers reported using Schools Attuned, improvements were observed across a variety of teacher skills and student outcomes:

- 89% of teachers had begun differentiating instruction as a result of Schools Attuned; 78% of teachers had begun promoting students' own use of learning strategies.
- 92% of teachers agreed that Schools Attuned supported their ability to identify students' strengths and areas in need of improvements; 89% reported increased ability to develop strategies to enhance their students' learning.
- 94% of teachers reported improvements in interactions with individual students (99% observed improvements across their classroom).
- 93% of teachers reported individual students to be more engaged in the learning process (98% observed improved engagement classroom wide).
- 92% of teachers reported individual students to be more motivated (96% observed improved motivation across their classrooms).
- 79% of teachers saw improvements in individual students' grades (88% indicated grade improvements across their classrooms).

SUMMARY

In their initial implementation, teachers were not yet as likely to use Schools Attuned in working with parents:

- While 79% of teachers reported that Schools Attuned supported their ability to communicate with parents about their children's learning, 37% reported involving parents in the implementation of strategies at home and 21% reported using Schools Attuned as a framework for parent meetings.

Teachers reported on the support for implementation they had experienced:

- Only 27% of teachers indicated that they had met with an Instructional Support Specialist (ISS) to support their use of Schools Attuned.
- Reasons for not meeting with an ISS ranged from not knowing what an ISS was to not having time to work with the ISS.
- Teachers commented on the importance of both administrative support and colleague involvement in supporting their use of the Schools Attuned Program.

REFERENCES

- Borasi, R. & Fonzi, J. (2002). *Foundations (vol. 3): Professional Development That Supports School Mathematics Reform*. National Science Foundation.
- Bransford, J. D. et al. [National Research Council] (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. National Academy Press: Washington, D.C.
- Guskey, T. R. (2002). Does it make a difference? Evaluating professional development. *Educational Leadership*, March, 45-51.
- Laine, S. W. & Otto, C. (2000). *Professional Development in Education and the Private Sector: Following the Leaders*. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Little, J. W. (1993). Teachers' professional development in a climate of educational reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15 (2), 129-151.
- O'Sullivan, R. & Page, B. (2000). *Collaborative Evaluation of Schools Attuned*. Evaluation, Assessment, and Policy Connections (EvAP).
- Rogers, C. R. (2002). Voices inside schools- Seeing student learning: Teacher change and the role of reflection. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72 (2), 230-253.

The Schools Attuned® Program is a program from All Kinds of Minds®.
SCHOOLS ATTUNED® and ALL KINDS OF MINDS® are registered marks of All Kinds of Minds.

WWW.ALLKINDSOFMINDS.ORG