

An AutismPro Case Study: School District builds innovative autism program around AutismPro

Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board wanted to build an autism program that went above and beyond expectations. With parental input and a helping hand from AutismPro, the Board established teacher-run Centers of Excellence for students with autism.

Background

Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board serves a student population of 8,550 with 21 schools offering Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12, plus a handful of alternative education centers.

Challenge

After reviewing current practices and engaging parents in a discussion about autism services, the Board decided it was time to re-evaluate its educational program for students with autism. In 2008, work began on a concept called “Centers of Excellence” that included three autism classrooms in existing schools (two at the elementary level, one high school) and teams of teachers and student support personnel to aid in the delivery of services. The goals were to develop an individualized program for each child, coordinate teams to work on programs, involve parents in the education of their children, and explore the benefits of a collaborative process.

Designed from scratch, the Centers took shape as an effective approach to address the challenges of students with autism. Human resources and sites were in place, but before the program could fully take off, staff needed to be trained and a core organizational concept found to tie everything together.



At A Glance: Case Study

Background

- Board includes 21 schools
- Parents heavily involved in district affairs

Challenge

- Wanted to implement a first-rate program to service students with autism
- Designed “Centers of Excellence”

Solution

- Implemented AutismPro to aid collaboration, and develop and maintain education plans for students with autism

Outcome

- Parents and teachers pleased with the new tools
- Parent involvement helped teachers better understand the children with autism

“I’m very pleased with the tracking systems provided... It’s a really great way to provide regular feedback to parents. The activities are also just right. They’re easy to prepare and use.”

Kathy Sottile, Teacher, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board

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Solution

The Board arranged for AutismPro to be provided for staff in each of the Centers of Excellence. The application provided many of the tools the program would need to succeed, including a comprehensive library of printable resources, progress tracking, and organized case information for every child. AutismPro staff traveled to Ontario to aid in the implementation of the software package, including initial training for teachers, support staff, and parents. Soon, staff were using AutismPro to communicate with parents, collaborate with their teams, and develop and maintain education plans for students in the program.

Outcome

Initial response to the Centers of Excellence was highly favorable, with parents citing their appreciation of improved communication and streamlined collaboration. The coordination of team efforts was made easy and accessible to the benefit of everyone involved. With the increased involvement of parents, teachers and student support personnel were able to better understand the children's unique needs and strengths, easing transitions and helping them make more informed decisions.



"I added other professionals to our team and they were so very impressed. In fact, when I sat down with the occupational therapist to review the goals she was setting for my students, several coincided perfectly with AutismPro activities we already had in place."

Kathy Sottile, Teacher, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board

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