In an effort to sustain program effects in early elementary grades, the Department of Public Instruction worked collaboratively with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute’s FirstSchool at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to support the development of practices and systems for using data to promote effective instruction in Pre-K - Grade 3 classrooms. Through professional development, technical assistance, and coaching, FirstSchool supported two school districts, Bertie County Schools and Martin County Schools, to strengthen the use of data to improve instruction.

Engaging in this process led to project-wide changes to a number of instructional practices, including:

- Increased oral language development
- More opportunities for student collaboration around content
- A shift toward a teaching style characterized by open-ended questions, back-and-forth exchanges between students and adults, and engagement through teacher participation and facilitation, rather than simply telling students information.

Key goals of the project included:

- Administrators and teachers will explore the principles and use of collaborative inquiry to inform instructional practice and knowledge of student learning and progress, with a focus on improving learning of African American, Latino, and low income students.
Using Data to Improve Classroom Instruction

Key goals of the project included: (continued)

• Using research observation measures, Snapshot and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), teachers and administrators will explore constructs of quality instruction, and interaction. Administrators and teachers will broaden their ability to view, and inquire into instructional practices and student engagement.

• Administrators and teachers will demonstrate an improved ability to articulate the value, purposes, and use of assessment and how it informs their instructional practices and knowledge of student learning.

• Administrators and teachers will learn to use the N.C. teacher evaluation to promote the use of data, evidence based practice, and collaborative inquiry in order to improve the school experiences of African American, Latino, and low income children.

Leadership team teachers, who received the vast majority of the direct professional development, made more changes to practice than their counterparts who did not receive direct professional development. However, a number of positive changes were also made by non-leadership team teachers, such as district personnel, principals, and leadership team teachers brought new information back to the school, resulting in cultural and instructional shifts.

The graph on page 1 shows the change in teaching approaches for leadership team teachers from the beginning of the project to the end. The four percent increase in scaffolded instruction potentially equates to 48 extra hours of high quality interactions with teachers for each student in these classrooms over the course of a school year.

Leadership team members gained proficiency in sharing with colleagues the research underlying the FirstSchool cultures of caring, competence and excellence. Based on this information and corresponding Snapshot data, they worked to change their practices, elevate the level of their teaching, and see children as capable of greater autonomy and collaboration.

What did we learn?

• Deep and lasting cultural shifts in schools are essential to meaningful, sustainable changes in classroom practice

• Helping schools make those shifts requires trust and long-term investment

• Truly understanding classroom data takes time and it’s important to devote time to understanding the data and its connection to instruction

• With that in place, educators were better positioned to use data on their own to improve instruction and avoid misconceptions about the data, when explaining it to their colleagues

For more information about the work of FirstSchool, go to http://firstschool.fpg.unc.edu/.