Evaluating the Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (POPFASD)

Summary Report, February 2021

Kristy Timmons, PhD, OCT, RECE

Heather Braund, PhD, OCT

James Reynolds, PhD

E-mail: kristy.timmons@queensu.ca

Website: www.kristytimmons.com

CONTENTS

Purpose

The goal of this objectives-based program evaluation is to evaluate the effectiveness of POPFASD in preparing educators to support students with FASD.

Timeline

This program evaluation will take place over three school years:

- Year 1: January 1st- August 31st, 2020
- Year 2: September 1st, 2020- August 31st, 2021
- Year 3: September 1st, 2021- August 31st, 2022

This technical report summarizes key findings from Year 1.

Overview of Data Collection

Two sources of data were collected: 1) pre- and post-questionnaires (online), and 2) the POPFASD annual report (2020). The online questionnaire was developed by the research team in collaboration with POPFASD team members. The pre- and post-questionnaires contained a mixture of both closed items (Likert) and open-ended (narrative) items. Our research team used Qualtrics, an online survey platform available through Queen's University to disseminate the questionnaires. When participants registered for POPFASD training, they were provided with a link to the pre- questionnaire. Four weeks following participation in the POPFASD training they were sent a post-questionnaire to complete (with a reminder e-mail sent two weeks later). The annual report was completed by the POPFASD team and shared with the researchers as an additional source of data.

It is important to note that Year 1 participation was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participation:

- Pre-Questionnaire: 121 completed responses

- Post-Questionnaire: 32 completed responses

- Pre- and Post- Questionnaire: 10 completed paired responses

Data Analysis

The quantitative data (Likert items) were exported from Qualtrics and uploaded into Excel for data cleaning. All missing responses were deleted prior to uploading the data into SPSS (Version 25) for analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to describe trends across the data. Given the small sample size of the paired data (pre- and post-responses from the same respondent) inferential statistics were not run. The qualitative data (narrative responses) from the questionnaire were uploaded in NVivo (Version 12) for analysis. The questionnaire responses and the annual report data were analyzed using a general inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We identified key themes (patterns) across the data using this analysis approach.

Findings

Questionnaire Data

Entire Sample (Pre)

The majority of participants had not completed POPFASD training (73.6%). Many of the participants also indicated that they had an understanding of FASD before the training (59.5%). More than half of the participants also reported that they used a variety of strategies to support students with FASD (54.6%). Lastly, some participants (33.1%) indicated that they were aware of POPFASD resources available to support students with FASD.

Entire Sample (Post)

Participants were invited to complete a post-questionnaire following completion of POPFASD training. More than half (68.8%) of participants reported that they accessed the POPFASD website since they had completed the training. Almost all (90.6%) of the participants shared that the POPFASD training had increased their understanding of FASD. Many of the participants (84.4%) also noted that POPFASD training had increased their knowledge of a variety of strategies that they used to support students with FASD. Similarly, the vast majority of participants (90.6%) noted that POPFASD training had increased their knowledge of POPFASD resources available to support students with FASD. Lastly, many (59.4%) participants expressed that POPFASD training had resulted in changes to their practice.

Paired Sample (*n*=10)

Five of the ten participants were resource teachers and nine had not completed any POPFASD training previously. After the POPFASD training, all participants agreed that the training increased their understanding of FASD. Almost all of the participants (90%) reported that the training increased their knowledge of strategies. Lastly, over half (60%) of participants agreed that the training resulted in changes to their practice.

Qualitative Findings

A total of six main themes emerged from the data. Please note that each theme includes examples from both the pre- and post- questionnaires.

THEME 1: BARRIERS

THEME 2: CURRENT STRATEGIES

THEME 3: DESIRED TRAINING OUTCOMES

THEME 4: BENEFITS OF TRAINING

THEME 5: INTEGRATION INTO PRACTICE

THEME 6: RECCOMENDATIONS

Theme 1: Barriers

The participants reported experiencing many barriers that impacted their ability to support students in their classroom with FASD. Some of these barriers related to knowledge as described by this participant "*The biggest barrier is not being sure what types of interventions and supports I can try to see if they improve the students' learning*" (Pre-Questionnaire). Another common barrier reported by the participants included a lack of access to necessary resources such as funding and personnel support. This participant described further "*the ability to have enough staff to support those students who struggle as a result of FASD*" (Post-Questionnaire). Another barrier that was mentioned by multiple participants was a lack of time "*Having enough time to learn more and put into practice the things I am learning. The day is always too short*" (Post-Questionnaire). Other barriers included class size, lack of attendance, scheduling, stigma, and lack of FASD identification.

Theme 2: Current Strategies

There were a variety of strategies that participants reported using in their practice. The two most commonly mentioned strategies included differentiated instruction and having support. The main strategies for differentiated instruction included modifying student work, modifying the curriculum, and having an adapted day. When participants described working with support it included EAs, ministry workers, parents, school administrators, resource teachers and social workers. Another strategy that was commonly reported by participants included the use of visuals; this participant elaborated "*lots of visual supports for executive functioning*" (Pre-Questionnaire). Multiple participants shared that they scribed for students. Participants highlighted the use of a variety of learning strategies such as chunking and reviewing work. This participant shared many other learning strategies in the Pre-Questionnaire "*learning strategies (repetition, re-teaching, modeling, scaffolding,*

chunking.)" A few participants also shared the use of one-on-one instruction as one of their strategies. Lastly, another frequently mentioned strategy included using breaks to help break up the learning for students.

Theme 3: Desired Training Outcomes

The third theme that emerged centred around what participants wanted to learn from POPFASD training. Participants most frequently reported wanting to learn practical strategies and additional knowledge. For example, this participant shared "*I hope to learn if I am inadvertently putting barriers in the students' way because of their different capabilities*" (Pre-Questionnaire). Participants shared how they wanted to learn strategies to manage specific challenges as reported by this participant "*Strategies to manage compulsivity and addictive tendencies*" (Pre-Questionnaire). Some participants sought to learn about approaches to manage tantrums, coping strategies, and to help with retention. Additionally, participants were eager to learn more about FASD and about available resources.

Theme 4: Benefits from Training

The most commonly reported benefits included a greater understanding, a new lens to view supporting students with FASD, more strategies, and increased confidence. Participants shared that they were keen to take additional POPFASD training. One participant shared their greater understanding "*I feel more competent and knowledgeable to better understand the needs of my FASD students and how I can support them*" (Post Questionnaire). Similarly, another participant was able to list multiple benefits, "*I feel much more knowledgeable about FASD in general. I found it especially helpful to learn about how different domains are affected, and how so many people struggling with FASD are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. This will help me to be more aware of potential student needs and how to support these students, especially those who are acting out*" (Post-Questionnaire). Participants also described how their view of students had changed as a result of POPFASD training, "*Just a better perspective and lens from which to view our students struggling with FASD*" (Post-Questionnaire). A few other participants shared that they felt more confident sharing the information as reported by this participant "*and it has given me the confidence to share this information in a very non-judgemental way*" (Post-Questionnaire). Multiple participants were eager to share what they had learned from POPFASD training with their colleagues "*Yes and I would share it with members of my team and those that work in other schools/districts. So much valuable discussion and resources to help*" (Post-Questionnaire). Overall, participants were able to list many benefits of participating in POPFASD training.

Theme 5: Integration into Practice

Many participants reported that they had integrated what they learned from the training in their practice. However, other participants shared that they were unable to integrate any course content in their practice as a result of the current COVID-19 circumstances. For example, this participant explained "*I have not as COVID has taken over our lives and I'm just trying to figure out how to help in*

this new normal" (Post-Questionnaire). Other participants reported a variety of strategies they had started to utilize in their practice including specific software, motivational strategies, planning strategies, the use of practice supports, routines, and considering strengths first. This participant discussed targeted planning for diverse students, "*and allowed us to plan for different approaches to the behaviours they present with*" (Post-Questionnaire). The vast majority of participants shared ways in which they were integrating what they had learned in their practice.

Theme 6: Recommendations

The most commonly reported recommendations included access to additional training and greater emphasis on practical applications. For example, one participant shared "*I would highly recommend having more of these trainings. It's a very wide spectrum. I personally believe we need more knowledge*" (Post-Questionnaire). One participant suggested that more training focused on high school aged students would be helpful. A few participants wanted greater emphasis on practical applications as suggested by this participant "*get to the strategies quick. It's all good info - but in our busy days I want tools and strategies that I can put into practice right away!*" (Post-Questionnaire). Other recommendations included continuing with engagement strategies, using a different technical platform, spending less time on logins, using more case studies, providing more district resources, and including short regular check ins. It is also important to note that although we probed for recommendations in the questionnaire, the majority of participants did not include any recommendations for improvement suggesting they were satisfied with the training they were provided with.

Annual Report Data

A total of six goals were developed for POPFASD 2019-2020 programming. A summary of goals and affiliated accomplishments are summarized below.

GOAL	SAMPLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS
POPFASD will increase the number of classrooms teachers (including Early Childhood Educators) who participate in FASD training	• Networking at conferences through teacher associations • Advertised through newsletters, magazines, and conferences • Knowledge translation through conferences, music circles, and magazine articles • Provided four additional livestreams • Purchased incentives for classroom teachers
POPFASD will work with BC schools to encourage the development of comprehensive	• Mission District to support pilot • Plans developed for fall 2020 start

plans to support a structured and long-term approach	• Four session series beginning Sept 2020, ending Jan 2021
POPFASD will develop quantitative and qualitative measurement tools to evaluate the effectiveness of our services.	• Ongoing collaboration with Queen's research team • Provided feedback on pre- and post-questionnaires • Manage survey reminders • Excel spreadsheets for tracking expenditures
POPFASD will engage in enhanced learning to support new program directions and staff development.	• Plan created for additional technical analyst • Create a way of tracking how team discussions regarding goals, objectives, creative plans, and ideas lead to technical support requirements – using KanBoard as primary source • Participate in 1 workshop with other teacher consultants • Hosting and leading team retreat • Using Kanboard to track CARS and FIRST work11
POPFASD will adapt its technical infrastructure to support rapid development and deployment of web applications and will begin to consolidate disparate user account silos into a single, unified system.	• Install Outlook or Thunderbird on staff – create shared contact lists • Plan integration with new school district Office 365 • Upload resources to website • Remove staff from Windows 7 • Initial training on use of KanBoard
POPFASD will create, publish, and make available, original content that synthesizes current research and evidence-based practice.	• Four COVID response videos created • POPFASD Stay Tuned and Stay Safe • Primary disabilities – overview - complete • Increase number of eLearning videos created

The annual report data demonstrates that the 2019-2020 year has been productive with a total of six ambitious goals outlined. Some of the activities have been temporarily placed on hold due to COVID0-19; however, progress for each goal is certainly evident from the annual report data. Given that many of the goals still have outstanding activities, we encourage the POPFASD team to carry out these activities in the 2021 year as appropriate.

The testimonials provided were overwhelmingly positive. Participants shared how appreciative they were to have access to such knowledgeable POPFASD staff and all of the relevant resources. Other common themes included sharing the resources and knowledge with colleagues to help build their capacity, the impact of having practical strategies, and having a better understanding of FASD. Generally, participants emphasized that the training had a positive impact on their practice and that they would appreciate additional training.

Next Steps

The research team will continue to collect and analyze Year 2 Pre- and Post- Questionnaire data. The team will engage in additional data collection efforts to capture the in-depth experiences of educators, parents, and students through semi-structured interviews. An ethics amendment has been submitted through Queen's University. Next steps will include ethical review with 1 School District (46 schools). Sample interview questions with the key stakeholders are included below.

Sample Educator Interview Questions

- Prior to the training, what were some of the challenges you faced teaching/supporting students with FASD?

- What information from the training was most helpful to you when teaching/supporting students with FASD? Why?

- What information from the training was the least helpful to you when teaching/supporting students with FASD? Why?

- What strategies do you now find helpful in supporting students with FASD? Why?

- To what extent do you have a theoretical foundation to make informed choices about the strategies you apply? Why?

- What has been the most successful outcome as a result of POPFASD training?

    - Please describe any unanticipated outcomes that you have experienced as a result of POPFASD training.

- What additional training/resources would help you to meet the needs of students with FASD?

- Would you like to comment on anything else that we haven't already discussed in this interview?

Sample Parent Interview Questions

- What is the most important thing that you want educators to understand about your child?

- What strategies or resources do the educators in your school use that support your child?

- What strategies or resources do you find most effective with helping to support your child?

- What are the barriers that hinder your child?

- What are the barriers that hinder your ability to support your child?

- What are the barriers that hinder an educator's ability to support your child?

- What training/resources do you think would help educators to further support your child?

- What training have you taken as a parent/caregiver?

- What supports have you accessed?

Sample Student Interview Questions

- Tell me about your day from the time you arrive at school until the time you leave. Possible prompts: What do you do first? Then what? Etc.

- What is your favourite thing to do at school? Why? What do you like most about school?

- What do you and your friends do for fun at school? Do you help each other learn? How? When?

- What is your least favourite thing to do at school? Why? What do you find most challenging about school? Why?

- What does your teacher do that you find helpful for learning? What does your teacher do that slows down your ability to learn at school?

- Does anyone else other than your teacher help you with your learning at school? If so, who? How do they help you? Do you get help outside of school? (probe: tutors)

- Can you describe how your parents/guardians help you with learning?

- Is there anything else that you would like to share with me that you haven't shared already?

*Please contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Kristy Timmons for additional information about the study design, reliability procedures, findings, and forthcoming publications.