

# Queen's Assessment and Evaluation Group

## Faculty of Education, Queen's University

### *Our History*

#### Early History

In early 2001, Queen's University adopted a strategic plan to support Faculties who wished to develop areas of specialization. In response to this plan, Dean Rosa Bruno-Jofré (2000-2010) approached Drs. Robert Wilson and Lyn Shulha about the Faculty of Education's potential to mount expertise in the areas of assessment and evaluation.

At the time, Dr. Wilson (PhD: University of Washington) had been working at Queen's University in the fields of measurement, assessment and quantitative research methods for 29 years. After coming to Queen's, he became a champion of academic research in support of quality teaching and learning. He developed strong consulting relationships with research officers in local school boards and with the Ministry of Education. He had also worked on the ground floor with those proposing what was to become the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO, 2003). Dr. Shulha (PhD: University of Virginia) joined Dr. Wilson as a faculty member in 1991, bringing her skills in educational evaluation, assessment and qualitative research methods. Dr. Shulha had initiated a program of research on the nature of collaborative inquiry and had been working with organizations such as the Elementary School Teachers' Federation, provincial and local social service organizations and program leaders internal to Queen's University to help them use evaluative inquiry in support of reasoned program decision-making.



Over the next decade, Drs. Wilson and Shulha collaborated on three major research projects focused on classroom assessment. Their work yielded empirical evidence to guide the integration of portfolio, rubric and alternative assessments into Ontario's educational policies and practices, and operationalized educational expectations via an integrated approach to teaching, assessment, and grading (e.g., Colegio Bolivar, Cali Colombia, 1996-2000; Hastings and Prince Edward School District, 1999; Kawartha Pine Ridge District, 1991-92). Dr. Wilson also formulated a teacher-

friendly way to articulate the complexity of cognition underpinning responses to assessment tasks (Fostaty Young & Wilson, 2000). The resulting I.C.E. model (Ideas, Connections, Extensions) gained traction both nationally and internationally as a way to answer the question, “What does learning look like?”

The notion of proposing an Assessment and Evaluation Group at Queen’s University was immediately appealing to the pair. They were already supervising two doctoral students in these areas: Cinde Lock (assessment) and Mark Lee (evaluation) – our first cohort of doctoral students at Queen’s Faculty of Education. In addition, they were experiencing the benefits of working closely with a new faculty colleague, Dr. Liying Cheng (PhD: University of Hong Kong and Killam Postdoctoral Fellow: University of Alberta). Dr. Cheng, a specialist in second language acquisition and language testing, came to Queen’s to pursue research on the impact of large-scale language testing on instruction, and the relationship between classroom assessment and instruction in language classrooms. The foundation of her program of research was on *washback* in language testing. Another of her interests was the academic and professional acculturation of international students and new immigrant professionals. This made Dr. Cheng an ideal candidate to lead the program evaluation of what became a major Faculty initiative, the



Alternative Teacher Accreditation Programme for Internationally Experienced Teachers (ATAPTE). The three were also eagerly awaiting the arrival of Dr. Don Klinger (PhD: University of Alberta). Dr. Klinger was bringing to the Faculty of Education a background in educational psychology and measurement as well as significant experience as a district coordinator in assessment. While he had been hired by the Faculty of Education at the same time as Dr. Cheng, his arrival had been delayed a year while he fulfilled his obligations to the Langley School District in British Columbia.

The presence of four Faculty members with both unique and overlapping skills held the promise of creating more intricate collaborative research proposals and responding to more multifaceted ‘request for service’ projects. Equally exciting was the possibility of attracting a significant number of graduate students who themselves would form the foundation of a community of scholars with more than 100 students graduated or in progress. Immediately upon Dr. Klinger’s arrival, it was quickly apparent that the four shared an ethos that became their calling card, namely, “that high quality measurement, assessment and evaluation is a foundation for meaningful evidence-informed decision-making” (2001, *AEG Brochure*). Together, they proposed the creation of the [Assessment and Evaluation Group](#). The proposal was endorsed by the Dean and approved by University Senate in Fall, 2001.



Robert Wilson retired from the Faculty in June, 2004. In recognition of his many accomplishments and contributions to the fields of assessment and evaluation, the AEG partnered with the Limestone District School Board to sponsor a two-day symposium: *Educational Data: What Form Informs*. This event brought together parents with teachers and researchers as a way to understand and help integrate the different perspectives influencing assessment policy and practices. In addition, the remaining AEG members, with support from the Faculty of Education, created *The R. J. Wilson Award*. This was established as an annual financial prize to support the research of a graduate student who, based on their approved research proposal, demonstrated the greatest potential to make a theoretical or practical contribution to the fields of classroom assessment practice, large scale assessment practice, or program evaluation. Each year, recipient name is added to a plaque that remains within the Faculty of Education and is also published in the convocation program.

## The Next 14 Years

From 2004-2017, Drs. Shulha, Cheng and Klinger remained active as collaborators. They built research and consulting profiles individually and collaboratively through SSHRC funding, request for service contracts, and the success of AEG graduates. Drs. Cheng and Klinger's SSHRC grant on the [Impact of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test on Second Language Students](#) (2005-2008) is one example of the kind of work taken on over this period. Their capacity for research, teaching, and service expanded even further in 2012, with the appointment of Dr. Christopher DeLuca (PhD: Queen's University). Dr. DeLuca arrived at Queen's having served two years at the University of South Florida in the fields of educational measurement, research, and classroom assessment. He brought with him an active program of research and very quickly expanded this program by attracting significant SSHRC funding and by becoming a key participant on new and on-going provincial service contracts. Dr. DeLuca's work focused specifically on how teachers expand their capacity for effective classroom assessment in service of student learning. His presence strengthened the research core of the group (e.g., Drs. Cheng and DeLuca's SSHRC grant on [What's in a Grade?](#) (2015-2020) and bolstered the internship model of graduate student education featured by the AEG through the [Classroom Assessment Research Team](#).



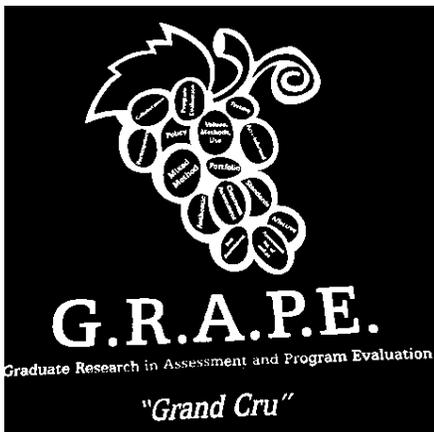
During this time, all four members expanded connections with researchers, practitioners, and educational service providers in Ontario (e.g., [EQAO](#), [OERS](#), [AERO](#), [Let's Talk Science](#), [MISA](#), [EOSDN](#), [Ottawa-Carleton District School Board](#)), in Canada (e.g., [CSSE](#), [CERA](#), [CAfLN](#), [TESL Canada](#), [CALA](#)), and internationally (e.g., [AERA-CA SIG](#), [CREATE](#), [JCSEE](#), [AEA](#), [ILTA](#), [TESOL](#)). By taking on governance roles within these associations, AEG members were able to influence both the policies and practices espoused by these communities. As well, consulting and research work in large-scale and classroom assessment, language testing, and program evaluation began to extend outside Canada (e.g., Australia, Chile, China, Iran, New Zealand, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, United States, and Vietnam). These connections and efforts enabled the group to demonstrate leadership within their fields and attend directly to the interests and strategic plans of Queen's University.

As participants in the continuing renewal of the Faculty's B.Ed., M.Ed. and Ph.D. programs, Drs. Shulha, Cheng, Klinger and DeLuca worked to design more relevant and inclusive learning opportunities for students. Within the AEG, this meant an ongoing willingness to update and adapt

undergraduate and graduate assessment, evaluation, and research methods courses to suit the evolving needs of students and practitioners. As much as possible, the AEG faculty willingly supports the scholarship of students outside the AEG requesting thesis committee support. In addition, between 2004 and 2017, they supervised nearly 100 Master's and Doctoral graduates within AEG. Support for graduate work continues, with an additional 26 graduate students currently active AEG members in 2018.



Students have always been central to the viability of AEG. They have maintained traditions of organizing and leading scholarly and social events and of mentoring each other throughout their academic careers. Graduate Researchers in Assessment and Program Evaluation (GRAPE) was established in 2011 to support the learning and academic growth of graduate students in AEG. GRAPE provided a platform for PhD and M.Ed. students to share and collaborate with their peers and faculty members in classroom assessment, large-scale assessment, and program evaluation.



GRAPE organized peer review sessions to support students for conference proposals, funds applications, and publications and offered assessment workshops that may be of interest to B.Ed. students. By eagerly immersing themselves in the research and service projects of AEG faculty members, students blend theory with practice while making significant contributions to the outcomes of projects. The bonds formed through these efforts and projects, as well as the pride students take in each other's accomplishments continue to nurture a strong sense of community for AEG students, graduates and faculty. AEG students strive to produce high quality Master's and Doctoral theses. Their work has contributed to influential publications and resulted in award winning conference

papers. Graduating students from AEG have found success in their highly varied, subsequent careers. AEG graduates can be found working in national and international academic positions, university positions in higher education, government ministries, and private consulting. In addition to our alumni, the [AEG](#) has a growing number of international scholars and research students who have joined our group.

Lyn Shulha retired from the AEG and the Faculty of Education in 2014, but remained active through 2017. An evaluation symposium in September 2015, *Exploring Past and Future Directions to Maximize Evaluation Use*, featured presentations by AEG students, AEG graduates and scholars from both Canada and the United States, including a paper by Professor Emeritus, Robert Wilson. This

symposium, as well as a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* (2017, 31(3)), served to applaud not only her career but also the accomplishments of the AEG members and alumni.

A second celebration, AEG's 15th anniversary as a productive scholarly group, took place in May 2016. At this time, Dr. DeLuca took the lead in bringing together researchers and practitioners from the *Canadian Assessment for Learning Network (CAFLN)* for a 2-day event that examined *Assessment for Learning in Policy, Research, and Practice*. Dr. Cheng, now the AEG Director, worked with Dr. DeLuca to assure that AEG students and graduates could benefit from this gathering of practitioners and thought leaders. In the Fall of 2017, AEG faculty and students were able to celebrate Dr. Cheng herself as she was awarded Queen's University's prize for *Excellence in Research*. That same year, Dr. DeLuca received the Faculty of Education's *Research Excellence Award* and in 2018 Dr. Cheng received the Faculty of Education's *International Research and Collaboration Award*. These awards testify to the supportive research culture created through the AEG leading to productive and influential work within the field.



Concurrently, Don Klinger, who had already served AEG as its Director, had begun to serve the interests of the Faculty of Education at large. Between 2014 and 2017, he alternated between the roles of the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies. It was not surprising, therefore, when the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand identified Dr. Klinger as the best candidate to become their next Dean of Education. AEG wished Dr. Klinger "Mihi" (congratulations) and "Ngā manaakitanga pai" (good luck) with an evening of festivity (November 16, 2017). The Faculty of Education followed suit with a heart-felt celebration of his career at Queen's (January 16, 2018). There is no doubt Dr. Klinger will always have a relationship with AEG.

On July 1, 2018, the Faculty of Education and the AEG welcomed Dr. Michelle Searle (PhD: Queen's University) as a new graduate faculty member and evaluation specialist. Since graduating in 2013, Dr. Searle has managed a demanding consulting career in Ontario, becoming an accomplished educational program evaluator, instructor, and researcher on program evaluation and methods of inquiry. Her interests include the nature of collaborative evaluation, the role of arts-informed evaluation and evaluation for knowledge translation/mobilization. In working alongside Drs. Cheng and DeLuca, there is no doubt the AEG will thrive with her support and guidance. While the group will miss the measurement and quantitative methods expertise that began with Dr. Wilson, and carried forward by Dr. Klinger, a five-year plan approved by Queen's University in 2017, that aims to bring up to 200 new faculty positions to Queen's over the next five years, bodes well for continued renewal and expansion of AEG. Going forward, the coming years promise to be exciting times for the AEG.



*Onwards!*

