

D-P Catholic students outpacing UG students in EQAO results

Students at Dufferin-Peel Catholic schools out-performed their colleagues in the Upper Grand public schools in the most recent Education Quality and Accountability Office's (EQAO) assessments of how well they know the curriculum.

The Dufferin-Peel board says the new assessments mark the sixth consecutive year in which the percentage of Dufferin-Peel students achieving at, or above, the provincial standard (Levels 3 or 4) in Grades 3 and 6 has equaled or exceeded the provincial averages.

The Upper Grand Board, meanwhile, said that while its grade 6 students made gains in reading and writing, results in other areas did not improve over last year. Test scores in mathematics dropped at both grade levels compared to the previous year, and in grade 3 results slipped in reading and writing skills.

Reading and writing in the junior panel (grade 6) were up by three and five percentage points (79% for reading and 75% for writing). Grade 6 students were on par with the provincial average in reading, but 3% below the average for writing. Mathematics performance is at a five-year low for junior students, down 2% over last year at 50%, and below the provincial average of 54%.

In grade 3 the province has surpassed UGDSB students in all areas a 70% provincial average in reading as compared to 66% in Upper Grand, with writing at 78% provincially and 72% in Upper Grand. Mathematics at 60% does not meet the provincial average of 67%.

I'm disappointed this year, even though the provincial trend is down in math, said Board Chair Mark Bailey. We'll have to do more analysis and put specific steps in the board and school improvement plans to increase these skills. We need to find out why we are lagging behind the province. I know we can do better, not just in math, but in reading and writing too.

He said board staff will move forward and take ownership for the results to improve student achievement in math and literacy. Some of the strategies include:

pholding the belief that all students can achieve by requiring School Improvement Plans to have a greater Mathematics focus;

upporting teachers to deliver a balanced numeracy program that includes basic skills, problem solving, and targeted instruction.

In contrast, Dufferin-Peel students exceeded the provincial average by a minimum of 3% in five of the six assessment areas, while matching the provincial average in primary mathematics. The results from the spring 2014 administration of the (EQAO) primary and junior division assessments of reading, writing and mathematics highlight the continuing high levels of achievement among Dufferin-Peel students.

Dufferin-Peel's trend of high achievement levels on the EQAO tests was maintained in the primary and junior assessments. The board said reading and writing in both Grades 3 and 6 have demonstrated steady, incremental improvement over the last five years (spring 2009 through spring 2014).

However, following the provincial trend, primary mathematics achievement in Dufferin-Peel schools has declined slightly over time. The board said it continues to show good performance in junior mathematics, but recognizes the need to further improve student learning in this key subject area.

Dufferin-Peel students have met or exceeded the province's benchmark, as well as outperformed the provincial average consistently over time, said John Kostoff, Director of Education. This is reflective of the culture of excellence that we strive to foster among students and staff at Dufferin-Peel. We continue to work hard on behalf of all students, to share best practice, advance new teaching and learning concepts and continue to improve student learning, achievement and well-being among all our learners.

It takes a collaborative effort by all parties – students, parents/guardians, faculty, staff, administrators and trustees to maintain this level of excellence over time, said D-P board chair Mario Pascucci. As trustees, we are committed to allocating resources and doing all we can to ensure that our students are put in the best position possible to succeed. These results, as well as our continuous improvement over time, are great indicators that we are right on track.

The D-P board said it will further analyze the EQAO results to provide support to schools, students and parents/guardians to ensure that more students continue to improve in all assessment areas. Each school has its own plan, which will be reviewed in the context of the test results, to improve students' skills in all subject areas. School plans include strategies to assist all students, including intervention and reinforcement for students who did not achieve the provincial standard.

EQAO assessments are but one of the tools we use to gauge student achievement and we are quite pleased with our results, not only with this assessment, but with our upward trending results over time, said Sheila McWatters, the D-P board's Associate Director of Instructional Services. By the same token, we know that we still have work to do and want to ensure our parents/guardians and students that we will continue to work strategically and prudently to improve even further in all subject areas.

The board said individual school results will be available on its website later this fall. Additional information on the various assessments can be obtained through the EQAO website.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is an independent agency whose mandate is to ensure greater accountability and help improve the quality of education.