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York Catholic Students Continue to Be Among Tops in Provincial Literacy Test

Results released today by the Education Quality & Accountability Office (EQAO) show that 90% of York Catholic students who wrote the 2008 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) for the first time were successful, compared to 84% provincially.

The Test measures students' reading and writing skills based on language expectations common to all subjects in the provincial curriculum, up to the end of Grade 9. Students must pass both the reading and writing components to successfully complete the test. The test is administered in Grade 10 and provides opportunities for students who do not pass to improve their skills and retake the test in later years.

Highlights of York Catholic results:

- 4,256 York Catholic Grade 10 students wrote the test for the first time in March, 2008.
- Over the past five years, the success rate for first-time eligible students in the board who actually wrote the test increased by 11 percentage points, from 79% in 2003 to 90% in 2008.
- More female students, who wrote the test for the first time, were successful and demonstrated improvement from the previous year compared to their male counterparts.
- The success rate for English-language learners who wrote the test for the first time increased by 11%.
- Of the students who were previously unsuccessful, *and rewrote the test*, 63% of these students attending York Catholic schools passed the test compared to 51% of students across the province.
- A fifth of the students in the board who were previously unsuccessful on the test were fulfilling the diploma requirement through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course. (*The OSSLC is a full-credit course that was developed by the Ministry of Education to give students an alternative method of demonstrating their literacy skills. The option to take the course is given to students who have been previously unsuccessful on the Literacy Test.*)

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“We applaud the organization of our schools in preparing for the test. Our already high scores and continued positive trend is a testament to the collaboration among teachers and partnerships with parents,” said Superintendent of Curriculum & Assessment, Debra Cormier. “As a Board, we made a commitment to prepare our students for success on the OSSLT,” said Cormier. Some of the strategies put in place at a number of York Catholic schools included the following:

- Students participated in subject-based literacy activities that support success on the OSSLT.
- Data was used to identify groups of students who continue to struggle; including students in applied-level and locally developed courses, special education, English-language learners, and boys in order to guide instructional practices.
- School library resource centres selected reading materials that appealed to students at all levels.
- In November, parents of students in Grades 9 & 10 were invited to a session, facilitated by the board’s literacy consultants, on strategies to support students at home in preparation for the test and on the day of the test
- Targeted lessons through "Literacy Tuesdays", after-school classes and/or Saturday programs
- Additional literacy classes for students who did not pass the first time
- Special accommodations and assistive technology provided for special education students
- Involvement of Teacher-Librarians in various capacities

| Fully Participating | % of York Catholic Students Successful | % of Students in Province Successful |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| March 2008 | 90% | 84% |
| March 2007 | 89% | 84% |
| March 2006 | 90% | 84% |
| Oct. 2004 | 87% | 82% |
| Oct. 2003 | 79% | 77% |
| Oct. 2002 | 73% | 72% |
| Feb. 2002 | 77% | 75% |

OSSLT -- 2008

Fully Participating Students

| | Successful | % change from 2007 | % change over 5 years |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Province | 84% | 0% | |
| YCDSB Students | 90% | +1% | +11% |
| Brother Andre | 90% | -3% | +2% |
| Cardinal Carter | 92% | +3% | +10% |
| Fr. Bressani | 91% | +7% | +21% |
| Fr. Michael McGivney | 86% | +4% | +5% |
| Holy Cross | 84% | +2% | +17% |
| Our Lady of the Lake | 87% | +0% | +11% |
| Sacred Heart | 93% | +3% | +8% |
| St. Augustine | 97% | +1% | +1% |
| St. Elizabeth | 90% | -2% | +3% |
| St. Jean de Brebeuf | 83% | -5% | N/A (new school) |
| St. Joan of Arc | 80% | +2% | +13% |
| St. Robert | 95% | +2% | +15% |
| St. Theresa of Lisieux | 94% | -1% | +/-0% |

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