



Contact: May Moore, Communications Manager (905) 713-1211, ext. 13003

Date: June 15, 2011

York Catholic Students' High School Literacy Test Results above Provincial Average

Results released today by the Education Quality & Accountability Office (EQAO) show that 88% of first-time eligible York Catholic students who wrote the March 2011 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) for the first time, were successful, compared to 83% provincially.

The OSSLT 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:

- Of the 4,474 students who were eligible to take the test for the first time, 98% actually wrote the test and the remainder were absent on the day of the test or were deferred from writing the test. The percentage of students participating in the test has remained fairly stable over the past seven years.
- Of the 4,365 students who actually wrote the test for the first time, 88% of these students were successful.
- When all first-time eligible students are factored into the overall success rate for the 2009/2010 Grade 9 cohort (i.e., students who actually wrote the test and students who were absent or deferred) the percentage of students who were successful is 86%. (*Deferrals are granted by school principals to students who are not ready to write the literacy test.*)
- Since the first administration of the literacy test in 2002, the success rate for first-time eligible students who actually wrote the test has increased by +11% for the Board compared to +8% for the province.
- Of the 589 students who rewrote the test, 63% of these students were successful.
- Both first-time eligible students and students who retook the test wrote the OSSLT on March 31, 2011.
- There were more students with special education needs (excluding gifted) writing the test compared to the previous year and these students experienced a 5% increase in achievement.

Superintendent of Curriculum & Assessment Debra Cormier points to a number of strategies that were put in place at a number of York Catholic secondary schools to help improve student achievement, including:

- 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 and locally developed courses, students with Special Education needs, English-language learners, and male students, in order to guide instructional practices.
- School library resource centres selected reading materials that appealed to students with a variety of learning needs.
- Parents of students in Grades 9 and 10 were invited to sessions, 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 were unsuccessful the first time.
- Special accommodations and assistive technology provided for students with Special Education needs.
- Involvement of teacher-librarians in various capacities, including the OSSLC (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course) that provides another opportunity for students who were previously unsuccessful to pass this diploma requirement.

"Our test scores continue to be among the highest in the province and this is something we are proud of," says Elizabeth Crowe, Chair of the York Catholic District School Board. "However, at the heart of those scores is the great teaching and learning happening in our schools. Our schools are clearly engaged, vibrant hubs of activity, focused on student achievement."

[END]