

# **Report of the 1999-2000 Provincial Grade 3 & Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics**

## **Lester B. Pearson Public School**

YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### **ABOUT THE GRADE 3 & GRADE 6 ASSESSMENTS**

The *Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics* are conducted annually in every publicly funded Ontario elementary school under the auspices of the province's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The assessments are based on *The Ontario Curriculum: Grades 1-8* and measure how well students have met the provincial expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. The students' work was marked according to four levels of achievement based on the expectations in the provincial curriculum. In the *Ontario Curriculum*, Level 3 represents the expected standard for Grade 3 and Grade 6 and identifies a high level of achievement of the provincial expectations. The work students produced during the assessment was marked by teams of specially trained classroom teachers and principals.

The assessments took place over a period of five days from May 8 to 26, 2000. For 2 1/2 hours each day, students participated in brief introductory activities with their classmates and teacher and then worked independently to read and respond to passages, to write responses and to solve mathematical problems. The use of real-world problems required students to use factual knowledge to apply, organize and communicate what they know and can do. The Grade 3 assessment was based on the concept of *Change* and the Grade 6 assessment was based on *Perspectives*.

The results of these assessments should be used to improve learning and teaching, not to rank schools. Rankings tell us nothing about why scores are high or low. They invite simplistic and misleading comparisons which ignore the particular circumstances that affect achievement in each school and they also distract people from addressing the critical issues of how to improve learning for all students.

### **CONTEXT FOR THE SCHOOL**

The approximately 650 students at Lester B. Pearson are drawn from a large section of the York Region District School Board with over eighty percent of the student population being bussed to school daily. In offering a full French Immersion program for students in Grades One through Eight to that large an attendance area, Lester B. draws students from a cross-section of socio-economic and urban/town/rural settings.

For most students, English is not only the primary language spoken at home, it is the only language spoken at home. By contrast, English instruction is not introduced at the school until Grade Four with forty instructional minutes daily. This ultimately increases up to 40% of the day by Grade Eight.

In Grade Three, the Mathematics section of the EQAO test only is administered, and that in a French translation of the English test. The other facets of the test, specifically Reading and Writing, were eliminated since students do not receive English instruction until Grade Four. Grade Six students, on the other hand, wrote all parts of the test in English, despite the fact that French is the language of instruction for Mathematics.

Due to processing difficulties, 1999-2000 is the first year that the Grade Three classes completed the entire Mathematics section. As such, it provides us with a starting point from which to embark. This "snapshot" of one week's work allows us to review aspects of both our instruction and assessment with a view to improving our techniques in both of those areas.





## NEXT STEPS

The results of the EQAO testing have provided us with an opportunity to examine in-depth certain skills and attitudes reflected by our students and to consider a variety of programming changes to address those issues. The staff has decided to strike a committee representing all grade levels to analyse the data, establish directions, strategies, individuals responsible for implementation and set measurable outcomes.

Although the Grade Six results are satisfactory and reflect results of high achievement, as with the Board and the Province in general, we are concerned with some of the 'soft' data around attitudes and approaches towards the tested subjects by both genders. Our investigations and approach will certainly address these issues from the earliest grades.

The continued discrepancy between the Grade Three and Grade Six results requires an intensive analysis of the second-language effect, and possible remediation solutions.

Initiatives started as a result of previous years' results will continue. Increasing student familiarity in taking tests and understanding that which is required within the test-taking environment will continue. By addressing this aspect, we will be more confident that the students will have the opportunity to show what they truly understand without the effect of the artificiality of the test-taking situation unduly altering their efforts and therefore the results.

Some subject-specific initiatives will also be continued. This includes the increased use of manipulative materials at all grade levels in order to aid understanding of the underlying concepts within Mathematics. As our school Reading focus continues to develop, we expect significant gains especially in the Grade Three results wherein reading and understanding the questions was an issue. As part of the focus, cross-curricular reading strategies will be emphasized resulting in students being able to understand and interpret non-fiction such as found in the Mathematics section of the test.

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