

# Public board working to boost student achievement

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After having recently received data from last year's provincial Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing, the public school board is working to improve student achievement.

The Halton District School Board is currently creating a Board Improvement Plan for all its grades, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

The plan will focus on four areas of achievement. They are literacy, numeracy, pathways, and safety and wellbeing.

EQAO tests measure, reading, writing and math in Grades 3 and 6, and Grade 9 math. The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Testing (OSSLT) tests literacy in Grade 10. The results are based on how many students achieve the required grade to pass the test.

Though the public board results reveal more of its students pass the tests in every category than is the provincial average, there are some areas that need to be improved.

For example, there is a gender gap for literacy achievement. Approximately 10 per cent more girls achieve the provincial standard in literacy in every age group, though the gap shortens to seven per cent at the OSSLT.

The gap is all but non-existent for mathemat-

ics testing.

Furthermore, students enrolled in English Language Learning (ELL) also have a lower achievement rate, though the gap has closed significantly in recent years, to be near the board level at nearly every age group and test category.

Special needs students who are not identified as gifted, scored results far below the board average — though those achievement rates have improved over the past five years.

Associate director Jeff Blackwell told trustees at the Wednesday, Oct. 19 meeting that the board has put a greater emphasis on improving its ELL programming, which likely resulted in students in the program faring well in the testing.

The improvement plan was developed by first looking at data, which in this case were the EQAO results. The board then built a strategic plan, followed by an operational plan. This led to creating a focus and initiative at the board level, the staff level and for the students.

The OSSLT results showed that 88 per cent of students in the academic program passed their tests, while 58 per cent of the students in the applied program passed their tests.

The tests are similar, according to Director of

See Achievement page 14

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