

LETTERS

Need chaperones for high school dance

Dear Editor,

Now that the first snowflakes have fallen, we have been forced to accept the arrival of old man winter. Along with the shivering, the icicles and the shoveling, we can enjoy the Christmas excitement that has already begun with bazaars, crafts sales and concerts.

At Acton High School the student body can also look forward to Christmas cheer in the form of a dance on December 13. The festive season is also a time for giving so this dance will also include a food drive to benefit the Acton Food Bank. However, because

of forces over which we have no control, the student council must have five community volunteers in order for this dance to happen. The role of these volunteers would be as chaperones from 7 - 10 p. m on the evening of the dance, Wednesday, December 13.

If this volunteering opportunity interests you please call either a co-social convener or co-president of AHS council at 853-2920. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Becky Chapman,
Co-Social Convener AHS
Executive Council

Grade 3 and 6 students test below provincial average

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Although they have made improvements, Acton's Grade 3 and 6 students continue to lag behind their provincial and regional counterparts in standardized testing of their reading, writing and mathematics skills.

While 54 per cent Ontario's Grade 6 students are working at or above the accepted level, just 42.3 per cent of students at McKenzie-Bennett Smith School (MSB) achieved that level in testing conducted last spring.

Results show 52.5 per cent of Grade 3 students of MSB and Robert Little Schools were working at the acceptable level in the three testing areas. The Halton-wide average is 64.7 per cent and the Ontario average is 57 per cent.

With the exception of Brookville School, the percentage of Grade 6 students working at the accepted level in all north Halton public schools - is also lower than Halton and provincial averages.

When asked about the lower scores in the north, Kit Rankin, the Halton District School Board's superintendent of education, said she hadn't done school-by-school or area analysis, yet and the "key" to the results is the action plans.

"At the school level and at the board level we're required to develop an action plan that just doesn't explain our results, but make some real plans for addressing anything we don't like in our results," Rankin said on Monday.

Results of Catholic Grade 3 testing at Acton's St. Joseph's School show students equalled the Halton percentage of students work-

GRADE 3 TEST RESULTS						
Results show the percentage of students working at or above expectations	Reading		Writing		Math	
	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999
Ontario average	53	48	56	56	62	60
Halton public average	61	56	64	61	69	68
Brookville	71	44	63	67	73	79
Limehouse	70	72	85	70	76	66
McKenzie-Smith Bennett	46	37	46	50	63	59
Robert Little	53	40	52	44	55	42
Halton Catholic	62	59	66	66	68	67
St. Joseph's	65	27	52	51	77	63

GRADE 6 TEST RESULTS						
	2000		1999		2000	
	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999
Ontario average	54	50	53	50	55	48
Halton public	56	56	56	54	54	48
MSB	47	37	52	25	28	26
Halton Catholic	65	59	63	59	63	52
St. Joseph's	46	27	34	54	26	6

ing at the accepted level - 64.6 per cent - and topped the provincial level of 57 per cent. Grade 3 students also showed an astounding increase in reading skills, to 65 per cent from 27 per cent.

While Grade 6 students at St. Joseph's showed large increases in the number of students testing at the accepted level in the three main testing areas - the average is only 35.3 per cent working at the accepted level, compared to the Halton-wide average of 63.6 per cent.

The province spent \$9 million testing Grade 3 and 6 students in Ontario to see how well they are understanding the new curriculum to determine here they need help.

The test designers - the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) cautions against using the test scores to compare schools, saying the results should be used by the boards in question to help decide where scarce dollars should be spent.

Rankin said of major con-

cern is the fact that boys are significantly lagging behind girls, a growing trend across the province that needs study.

"One of the first things we are doing with our administrator tomorrow is to ask what are some possible reasons for the poor results for boys," Rankin said.

At Robert Little School, where Grade 3 test results are up between nine and 14 per cent in reading, writing and math from last year, but slightly below the Halton average.

Principal Don Warren said the boys like the work and are confident, but test lower than the girls, who are not as confident.

"It's interesting to see the high level of somewhat misplaced confidence in the boys, whose test results are lower than the girls who are not as confident," Warren said, adding although the test results are up in all three areas at Robert Little, "there's still more work to do."

At MSB, the number of Grade 6 students who achieved accepted results in writing jumped to 52 per cent from 25 per cent, the Ontario average is 53 per cent, but there's cause for concern with the math results.

They show just 28 per cent of students tested at the accepted level, up from 26 per cent last year, compared with 56 per cent Province-wide and a Halton average of 54 per cent.

One Acton parent, Lois Matton, who has a Grade 3 student at MSB is concerned with the numbers.

"Our school is significantly below the results of the provincial average and I would think that our school had better do something to address that discrepancy and bring it back up to the average," Matton said after reviewing the figures released by the Halton District School Board.

Matton also questions the figure showing 52 per cent of Grade 6 students at MSB achieved accepted levels of learning in writing, compared to 25 per cent last year.


"For there to be that much of a jump, there's got to be a statistical error," Matton said, adding the "abysmal math results" - 28 per cent of MSB students testing at the accepted level compared with 55 per cent province-wide and 56 per cent in Halton - are for the second year in a row.

MSB Principal Elsa Stolfi couldn't account for results showing the number of Grade 6 students writing at the accepted level more than doubled from last year, or why MSB Grade 6 students again did so poorly in math.

"We are going to be generating an EQOA plan to target the areas that really jump out at us - the general themes. You hit on the math for example. We've done really a whole lot better in other areas - we're very much comparable to the provincial results (in reading and writing) and then there's this area in math that needs to be addressed," Stolfi said, adding they also want to "celebrate their successes."

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