

Halton Grade 10 students are above average on literacy test

Halton District School Board

TIM WHITNELL
Special to The IFP

The majority of Halton's public high school students achieved above the provincial average in recently-released results for the 2007-08 Grade 10 Literacy Test.

Fourteen out of Halton's 16 conventional public high schools exceeded the average of 84 per cent of students across Ontario who passed the test. Ninety per cent of Halton District School Board (HDSB) students who wrote the test for the first time were successful in demonstrating their reading comprehension and writing skills.

- Acton District - 88%
- Georgetown District - 85%
- Gary Allan (Score)** - 18%

** Adult, Alternative and Community Education Program

In the past six years, the Halton public board's overall Grade 10 Literacy Test pass figures had been rising before flat-lining the last three years: 80, 85, 88, 90, 90 and 90.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) prepares and evaluates the Grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

In all, 3,610 HDSB students wrote the test for the first time on March 27 of this year.

Ruth Peden, Acting Associate Director of the Halton public board, noted that a pass in the literacy test is not an individual score of at least 50 per cent but a student who meets the provincial standard of Level III of academic achievement, which is roughly a 'B' average.

Halton Catholic District School Board

TINA DEPKO
Special to The IFP

Grade 10 students in the Halton Catholic District School Board have demonstrated they are above average when it comes to literacy.

The results for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test Results for 2008 were released last week, with 92 per cent of students in the Catholic board passing the test. This was well above the provincial average of 84 per cent. Christ the King's score was 92 per cent.

It is an important accomplishment, according to Rick MacDonald, superintendent of education, curriculum services with the Halton Catholic District School Board.

"I think this speaks well for the board and we're extremely proud of the results," he said.

More than 2,200 students in the region's seven Catholic high schools wrote the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test in March.

The Halton Catholic board's success rate is up three per cent from last year's success rate of 89 per cent. The increase reflects the dedication of the high schools, MacDonald said.

"I think the teachers and the principals deserve praise, as well as the central office staff because they are providing support to the schools," he said. "It is a concerted effort, from senior administration to the classroom teachers. Everybody in the system embraces the concept of student improvement."

MacDonald said that the students' success is also

Peden noted that the loftier pass standard is part of the reason why the Gary Allan Score program students scored so low. She explained that they are a small number of students in Grades 9 and 10 who receive school community outreach education getting a half day of math and English instruction with the other half day spent at a supervised co-op site.

"The focus is on their re-entry into the (conventional high) school. They are kids who have fallen through the cracks. It's more attitudinal; they've lost interest in school. To try to engage them we try to get them in an environment that is away from the (traditional) school," observed Peden.

Overall, Peden said the HDSB's students are doing well on the literacy test.

"The Grade 10 Literacy Test results are an indication of the efforts of educators to improve students' literacy skills across the board," she said. "We're proud of our students' accomplishments and the support our teachers have provided to help all students improve their literacy skills."

"In Grade 9 and 10 classes, schools prepare their students with cross-curricular reading and writing lessons modeled on the format of the test. Students are also offered lunchtime and after school practice sessions," said Peden.

The literacy test is compulsory for all Grade 10 students. Passing the test is a prerequisite for graduation in Ontario. Students who are not successful may rewrite the test in Grade 11 or 12. Students may also enrol in a Grade 12 literacy course as an alternative means of demonstrating the literacy skills necessary to earn a high school diploma. The complete test can be found at www.eqao.com.

reliant on solid instruction in younger grades.

"We have to remember that these students are in the system from Kindergarten to Grade 12, so I think we have to congratulate our elementary teachers and principals as well," he said.

While some parents and educators have voiced concern against standardized testing, MacDonald said it is an invaluable tool in tweaking the curriculum to ensure students are up to provincial literacy standards.

"The test is used to measure the curriculum, so I think it is an accurate measure," he said. "For our purposes, it is very useful to determine what students need to know and what areas they are deficient in so that we can recognize those areas and we can put school improvement strategies in place to correct that."

Grade 10 students in the Halton Catholic board have consistently performed above the provincial average since the test's inception in 2003. Past success rates compared to the provincial average are 83 per cent to 77 per cent in 2003, 87 per cent to 82 per cent in 2004, 92 per cent to 84 per cent in 2006, and 89 per cent to 84 per cent in 2007.

The Halton Catholic board ranked No. 1 when it compared to its counterparts in the Greater Toronto Area. As for next year, MacDonald said it is onwards and upwards for the Halton Catholic board's test results.

"We've set a goal for a two per cent increase, which is a tall order, but I think we can do it," he said.



Car crash on Mountainview

Two vehicles collided at the intersection of Mountainview Rd. and Barber Dr. Thursday around 5:30 p.m. creating a major traffic tie-up during rush-hour. Ambulance, fire and police personnel responded to the scene. No further details were available from Halton Police.

Charged with road rage

An Acton man was charged in a road rage incident at Guelph St. and Sinclair Ave. Thursday afternoon.

Police say at about 1:30 p.m. a man driving a truck pulled in front of a car driven by another man.

The truck driver stopped his vehicle, got out and went to the car behind him and began yelling at the driver. He then began pulling and punching the driver of the car through the open window.

The driver of the car got out of the vehicle through the driver's side window and a friend came to help him. He was not seriously injured.

Police responded and charged the truck driver. Charged with assault is Gordon Reid, 47, of Elgin St.

Cash stolen

An undisclosed quantity of cash and a cash drawer were taken from Domino's Pizza on Mountainview Rd. during a break and enter Saturday between 1 and 7:15 a.m. The front door was shattered to gain entry.

Car emblems swiped

Emblems, valued at about \$220, were taken from six vehicles at Georgetown Toyota on Mountainview Rd. early Wednesday morning. Police report six people were captured on videotape walking onto the lot at about 1:40 a.m.

Break and enters

Police are investigating several break and enters into vehicles that occurred late Thursday or early Friday in the Delrex Blvd. and Windsor Rd. area. A cell phone was taken from one vehicle, change from

Police blotter

another, and sunglasses from another. In one incident, the owner of a vehicle on Delrex Blvd. saw two youths in her car at about 3:30 a.m. Friday, spoke to them, then they fled on foot. Police responded, but did not find the youths.

One is described as male, white, about 5'10", with a thin build, curly, dark hair and wearing a black t-shirt and jeans. The other youth is female, white, about 5'7", with a thin build and dark hair in a bun. She was wearing a white sleeveless t-shirt and carrying a beige cloth bag. They were approximately 15 to 17 years old.

Digital cameras stolen

Police report three digital cameras were taken from the Shopper's Drug Mart store on Queen St. in Acton Friday afternoon. A male and female were captured on store video at about 4:10 p.m. taking the cameras out of their packaging, putting them in a bag, then leaving the store without paying. Police are investigating.

Sorry, wrong number

An incorrect phone number was listed in the caption accompanying a photo about the Georgetown Service Canada Centre for Youth in the Friday, June 27 edition of *The Independent & Free Press*.

The correct phone number for the student job centre is 905-877-7797. The centre is located at 232 Guelph St.

The Independent & Free Press regrets the error.

Backyard Touch

318 Guelph Street
Georgetown
905.873.8835



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