Anna Wharton

Improving test scores requires expertise and team work

Literacy is a major focus in high school programs across the Province of Ontario with the demands of the current government for all grade ten students to pass a standardized literacy test.

This September when high school students returned to school refreshed from their summer's vacation, hopefully looking forward to the challenges of new teachers and new material, the grade tens also faced a Ministry test, widely referred to as the EQAO (Educational Quality and Accountability Office) test. As teacher-librarians, we have to be part of this school-wide literacy initiative. In the library we see a broader perspective and can observe what students read and how they go about learning. We perform a balancing act of embracing the new technologies while holding firm to traditional teaching methods of research and reading. Therefore, this year when literacy test scores and accountability are being discussed, teacher librarians will have an excellent opportunity to be part of the literacy team. We must become involved in:

● selecting materials which support the school goals
● finding creative ways to promote reading among poorly motivated students
● helping assess and evaluate learning
● mentoring teachers and students
● finding out about the new software avai able.

When the results for the preliminary practice test were disclosed in the spring of last year, our school strategies to improve student achievement became a major focus during our staff meetings. The discussion was about improving the scores and adopting teaching practices based on the requirements of the EQAO style of test. Essentially, literacy in the broadest definition includes visual skills as well as skills needed to decode language, make inferences, organize ideas and decipher main ideas, among many other complex tasks. To bolster student success, all subject areas needed to find ways to approximate a similar series of tasks to reinforce these skills.

The larger framework of what was going on in