

Creating a Literacy Carnival @ your library[®]

Promoting Student Success on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

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At Oshawa Central Collegiate Institute, we wanted to further develop a school-based strategy to help our students be more successful on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). This article outlines how we created a Literacy Carnival, which included the training of staff and students to help us meet this objective.

Since students are asked to write a newspaper article using the 5 Ws as part of the Literacy Test, we thought it would be fitting to use that model in this article.

WHAT is a Literacy Carnival?

Our Carnival was set up to help train the students to use OSSLT strategies. We knew we had to create an atmosphere of fun and inspiration if we were going to survive an entire day in the library with approximately 25 grade nine students. We created a prize table and had lucky draws throughout the day. We used motivational music and video clips to provide inspirational messages and establish an energetic atmosphere. Our goal was to coach the students into believing they had the tools to successfully take the Literacy Test.

WHEN is the Literacy Carnival?

We booked a week in May and invited the

eligible grade 9 students to our Carnival. In October of the following year, just prior to the actual test days, we invited the students back into the library for a shortened Review Carnival to refresh their memories about the necessary strategies. It was at this time that we laid out exactly what was going to happen on the test days, which helped alleviate the stress many students feel prior to taking an important test.

WHERE is the Literacy Carnival?

As teacher-librarians, we all know there is a direct link between literacy and libraries, so it only seemed natural to run this event in our library. This event provided an opportunity to advocate the important role the library and teacher-librarians play within a school.

WHO comes to our Literacy Carnival?

We sat down with Guidance and Administration and created a list of Grade 9s who were not only eligible to write the test but who would benefit from this Carnival. Using discretion, we invited only those students we thought would participate willingly. The Carnival would not work if we had to deal with behavioural issues all day. Our Administration Team was very supportive and played an important role in enforcing the importance of the Carnival and helping us set the tone for the event.