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SUNDAY THRU THURSDAY
11 A.M. - 8 P.M.
FRIDAY & SATURDAY
11 A.M. - 11 P.M.

887-5240

Report questioned

Principals concur, students not less able

STOUFFVILLE — Students today are not necessarily less able in basic skills, than eight years ago, despite an Oct. 15 report to the York County Board of Education that may have indicated the contrary.

That was the conclusion of two local elementary principals in recent interviews with The Tribune.

Lorne Boadway, principal of Summitview School said that in going back to his own records in 1966 that "there was some evidence, if anything, that our standards are improving."

The Oct. 15 report to the board indicated that performance of students across Canada on certain standardized tests has consistently fallen from norms established in 1966.

Orchard Park School principal Keith Sutherland questioned whether the 1966 norms still have validity today. "You're talking about two different things," he said, pointing out that the program now contains different emphases.

"For example, we no longer teach Roman numerals," he said. "I'd like to think," he added, "that my good students now are as good as they were in 1968."

Both men felt that a letter to The Tribune last week by York Board of Education chairman Merna Colbourne had some validity. In that letter, she asserted that recently established 1973 Canada-wide norms would make a more useful comparison, since the practice of "failing" students has decreased since 1966.

Both principals further agreed that any standardized test is open to wide interpretation and can be affected by factors as intangible as the time of day it was administered.

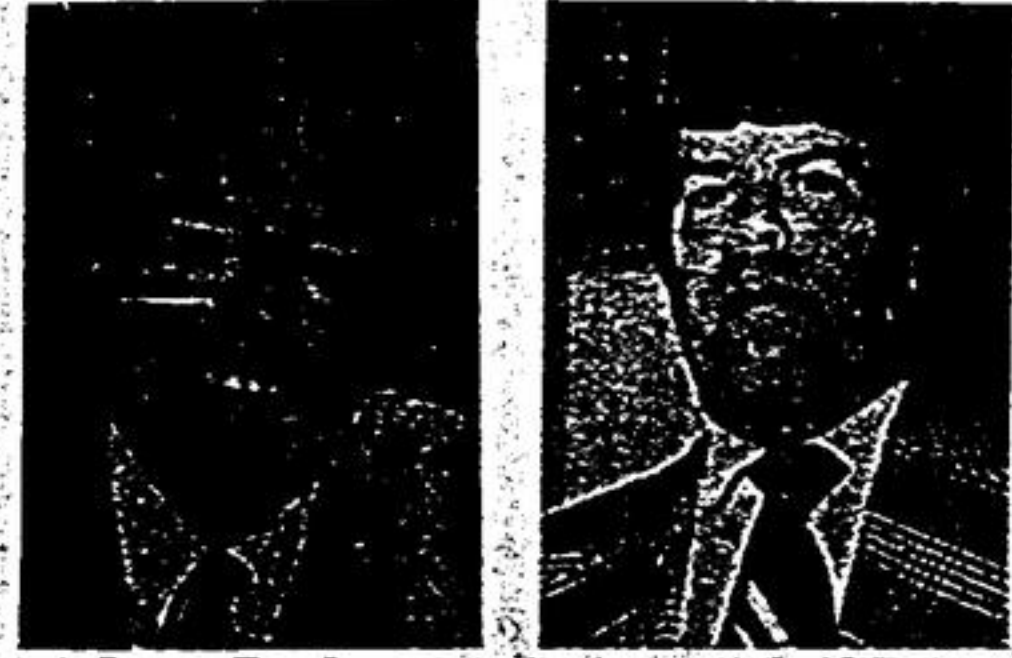
Mr. Boadway said the purpose of standardized tests "is for diagnostic purposes for individual students," not for making comparisons between schools, regions, or past students.

The two principals also observed that standardized tests may not take into account many areas besides basic skills.

"There's a whole different kind of student now than eight years ago," Mr. Sutherland said. "They're a lot more creative, with broader backgrounds than they had before."

He gave as an example a couple of grade two students who independently researched space programs at the time the first men landed on the moon.

"Their interests are certainly broadened,"



Lorne Boadway



Keith Sutherland

Mr. Boadway agreed. "They have a greater willingness to pursue topics on their own. Children are developing an independence in learning... I think this is a good thing."

He added, however, that other students still "need prodding."

Both principals stressed that their schools still have "core programs" of reading, writing and math that are "fairly traditional," in the words of Mrs. Sutherland.

"In social sciences, art and other areas they start branching off more, and a child can start using more of his creative ability," Mr. Sutherland said.

Standardized testing measures "a very tight part of the program," he continued.

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Mr. Boadway said the purpose of standardized tests "is for diagnostic purposes for individual students," not for making comparisons between schools, regions, or past students.

The two principals also observed that standardized tests may not take into account many areas besides basic skills.

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