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**EDUCATION: School plans for student improvement working, chairperson says**

# Math scores huge success story: board

FROM PAGE 1

conduct and a renewed focus on reading for the school's climb from near the bottom of last year's list.

"The goal of the school is to look at reading in a broad sense and we have a new teacher who is highly skilled in literacy," he said. "I also have a really strong group of committed teachers."

Hargreaves says the new code of conduct created a learning environment that suits the demands of the specific provincial test.

Overall, the York Region, public

board had the highest math scores in Ontario.

"One of the significant success stories is the performance in mathematics," said Daria Lindsey, an evaluation officer with the board. "We have 93 per cent of students above, at or near the provincial standard and 15 per cent more at level three and four than any other board."

The Ontario average was 46 per cent at or above the standard.

Lindsey said students have improved in geometry, traditionally the worst subject.

"But we need to work on problem solving and communication of knowledge," she said.

The board also tied for top spot in reading and third in writing.

"The York Region school board is the only board that can claim 60 per cent or better in reading, writing and math," said director Bill Hogarth. "Parents should be pleased, primary division teachers can take pride in a job well done, and principals and vice-principals can feel successful knowing their school plans for student improvement are working."

"All of our students are getting a solid grounding in the basics."

Almost 5,000 York Region students wrote the tests, which were based on the new provincial curriculum.

Leggatt said she was thrilled to see the new curriculum focus on the three Rs and believes Flowervale students adapted well to the return to basics.

"I looked at the new curriculum and said 'It's about time,'" she said. "The program here started in September 1997, so really, it's a coincidence that the program seems to suit what's happening in curriculum."

The school also has an established relationship with parents, who are asked to sign a statement of commitment when children are enrolled in the school.

That said, only 23 per cent of students at Flowervale said they had someone read to them at home — below both the regional and provincial average.

The test was also different from last year, as the length of the test was narrowed from 10 days to five.

The tests, prepared by the Education Quality and Accountability Office, are graded from levels one to four.

Level three, meaning students demonstrate general knowledge and understanding of the material, is considered the acceptable level of achievement by the province.

At level two, some knowledge and understanding is shown but more work is needed.

The good results aren't being taken for granted, said Hogarth.

"That's not to say we should be complacent or rest on our laurels. Personally, I would like to see more parents reading to children. Only 25 per cent of parents read to their children in York Region, compared to the provincial average of 29 per cent. To set a baseline, I'd like to see 35 per cent reading to their sons and daughters next year."

Many schools that turned in poor performances last time around made significant gains this year.

While officials shun the idea of comparing results because the tests were different, the changes made because of last year's performance paid dividends.

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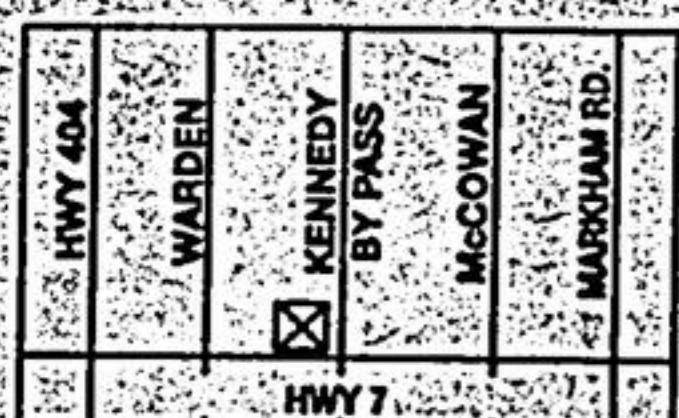
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