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Catholic schools start analysing test data

Councils, principals will participate in planning strategies

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

Barbara Bodkin will often repeat a quick phrase to parents and teachers overwhelmed with data accumulated from the province's Grade 3 and 6 tests.

"Weighing the pig doesn't make it fatter," says Bodkin, the superintendent of curriculum and assessment at York Region's Catholic school board.

With last week's release of the Education Quality and Assessment Office's test scores from the region's 62 Catholic elementary schools, board officials, teachers, parents and children have been inundated with a host of raw figures.

And expect the scenario to intensify next year, since the Ministry of Education has announced students in grades 9 and 10 will also be subjected to a new series of tests. In fact, the province has said every Ontario student should be tested on his

or her skills each year.

And that's a notion causing some concern for Bodkin.

"You can get so much data about student achievement, but just collecting it isn't enough," pointed out Bodkin. "I know a lot of parents want testing two or three times a year but, in my view, that's a misguided assumption."

Having the two grade levels tested in the elementary and secondary levels is a good balance. But my wish is not to move to yearly testing (for all grades). That could be too much because it's a lot of data to work with.

Tuesday's release of the EQAO assessments shows the region's Catholic students in grades 3 and 6 performing well above their provincial counterparts in reading, writing and mathematics and, on average, are better than students at various Catholic boards across greater Toronto.

While some schools posted higher percentages, Debra Cormier maintains the tests provide educators with the opportunity to discover the strengths of students and where their weaknesses lie.

"There is a lot of administrative work preparing the children for the tests, but they learn a lot just by preparing them," pointed out Cormier, the principal at St. Matthew Catholic elementary school in Unionville, where Grade 3 students finished first in test scores and Grade 6 students finished 11th.

Included in the EQAO tests are questionnaires for students, parents and teachers and, according to Holy Spirit principal Kerry Comiskey, information culled from those research papers is just as important as the test scores.

"I have mentioned to my staff that it's just not the Grade 3 and 6 tests we are running here," said Comiskey, whose school has shot to the top echelon of the rankings since it first opened in 1996. "If we can use some excellent literature and get children excited about learning when a child enters junior kindergarten, it will carry on with them."

Bodkin said the board has invited chairpersons from school councils to join principals in analysing the results before mapping out future strategies.

ADVERTISING CORRECTION

COMMUNITY 2000 SECTION

Due to a typographical error The Coldwell Banker Coventry Real Estate advertisement on the back page, was printed incorrectly.

THE EMAIL SHOULD READ:
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We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused Coldwell Banker Coventry Real Estate and its customers

ECONOMIST & SUN

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- Worked with our suppliers to plan for disruptions should they occur.
- Planned for disruptions to hydro, water, telephones, etc.
- Made arrangements for additional staff to be on-site or on-call should special needs arise.

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