

# School boards hit homer in Fraser report

BY TERESA LATCHFORD  
Staff Writer

The grades are in and eight York Region elementary schools received a perfect 10.

The region's school boards fared just as well in the fourth annual Fraser Institute report card ranking the province's schools.

The Conseil Scolaire de District Catholique Centre-Sud took the highest ranking of 7.9 out of 10, Conseil Scolaire de District du Centre Sud-Ouest second with 7.8 followed by the York Catholic District School Board at 7.6 and the York Region District School Board with 7.2.

The report ranks 2,818 of Ontario's elementary schools, from public and separate school boards as well as French schools. It is designed to help parents choose the best school for their children and monitor a school's performance.

But principal Clayton LaTouche of William Berczy Public School in Unionville doesn't put much value in being ranked first and receiving a perfect grade.

"We (at the school) do not support the rankings because schools are complex organizations," Mr. LaTouche said. "EQAO (standardized testing, which the Fraser report is based on) is only one aspect of the success of a school."

The report uses nine indicators to determine rankings including average level of achievement on the Grade 3 and 6 EQAO in reading, writing and mathematics.

As well, it uses the difference between Grade 6 male and female students in their average levels of achievement on the EQAO assessments in reading and mathematics plus the percentage of assessments that did-

n't meet the provincial standard.

"There is more to a school than test scores," principal LaTouche said. "School safety, if the students are ready to learn, a student's sense of belonging and knowing the students and families you are serving are all components of success."

Pope John Paul II Catholic Elementary in Richmond Hill also scored a perfect 10. It is nice to be recognized, Principal Dane McWatters said, but she agreed the report card doesn't consider behind-the-scenes programs and initiatives.

"We have hard-working staff, community and parents that make the school successful," she said. "This looks at academics and not the programs, projects or work done with the Ministry (of Education)."

Sutton Public School received a 5.5 out of 10, but there are positive programs in place to improve student learning and teaching practices, principal Kim Wittekoek said.

"You can't compare apples and oranges," she said.

Sutton Public has literacy programs to improve the school's standing. The first step was to discard the class teaching approach and examine students' specific needs.

With the help of a consultant, the school implemented programs such as the bounce literacy approach, a guided independent reading and writing program where students are grouped on a daily basis to work on an issue they struggle at, for example summarizing.

"With data like the EQAO and the Fraser Institute, we can determine what resources we need to succeed," Ms Wittekoek said.



STAFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/TERESA LATCHFORD

It's warm, sunny and the school year is almost done. For many students, that means skipping classes.

## Forged notes help some students enjoy 'skip school month'

BY TERESA LATCHFORD  
Staff Writer

Before you give your child trouble for cutting class, consider how many times you skipped school to lounge under the June sun.

For generations, June has been, unofficially, "skip school month" for students who can't fight the lure of warm weather and anticipation of summer vacation.

One Grade 12 student, who will remain unnamed, said she can't resist cutting class on a hot Friday.

"You are almost done the week and you just want to go outside," she said of Friday afternoons. "It is too hard to resist the temptation."

With a group of her friends, she usually goes for lunch and they coax each other into not returning. Instead, they hit some common hot spots for students cutting class.

"We go to the mall, the coffee shop or, sometimes, just out in the field behind the school and sun tan for the afternoon," a fellow Grade 12 student said.

"We have been cooped up for so long in the winter, we just need to get out of class."

Some students don't even leave the school grounds when cutting

class and settle for socializing in the cafeteria, while others play football or frisbee on the school field.

Other times, students will pile into a car to take a trip to a nearby beach for some fun in the sun or just stay home and relax.

*"You are almost done the week and you just want to go outside. It is too hard to resist the temptation."*

Getting caught doesn't seem to be a deterrent.

One student even admitted to forging notes from her parents to get out of serving a detention, but the majority of the time, excuses will do.

And those excuses seem to be timeless.

"I didn't feel well so I went home," one student said.

"My friend had a crisis," another chimed in.

"I just say I didn't feel like going," a third laughed.

Seniors at the Newmarket Seniors Meeting Place used the same excuses when deciding they didn't want to

go to school.

Bob McGann, 70, said he remembers the seduction of a nice day, when he and his friends would go to the pool in Aurora, play baseball or pool and get into loads of trouble.

"We used to steal (Canadian) flags and then return them the next day," he laughed as he remembered. "We also used to taunt the cops and then run like hell."

Once a police officer chased the group of rowdy teenagers across railroad tracks where the officer tripped on the tracks, accidentally triggering his gun. "But of course, you can't do those kinds of things today," Mr. McGann said.

Doug May, 70, remembers building a dam across the river on Lorne Avenue in Newmarket and swimming until dinner time or going chipmunk hunting with a bow and arrow at a local farm. He never got caught until one trip to the Thornhill pool.

"We used to hitch-hike up to that pool," he said. "But we got caught because we couldn't get home."

Detentions didn't deter these troublemakers either because a day out of class was worth every minute in the principal's office.

### Fraser Institute School Rankings:

#### York Region schools ranked first in Ontario

SCHOOL	TOWN	2005	2004
Roy H. Crosby	Markham	10	9.9
St. Justin Martyr	Unionville	10	10
William Berczy	Unionville	10	10
Flowervale	Thornhill	10	9.6
St. Angela Merici	Woodbridge	10	10
Bayview Glen	Thornhill	10	10
Pope John Paul II	Richmond Hill	10	8.7
St. Emily	Woodbridge	10	7.9

#### York Region schools ranked low in Ontario

RANK	SCHOOL	TOWN	2004	2005
2709	Jersey	Keswick	2.6	3.9
2436	Prince Charles	Newmarket	4	7.1
2324	Deer Park	Keswick	4.3	6.2
2324	Lake Simcoe	Keswick	4.3	6.2
2122	Black River	Sutton	4.8	6.2

The full Fraser Institute Report Card is available at [www.fraserinstitute.ca](http://www.fraserinstitute.ca)

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