

Faith in High Scores

By Malkin Dare

Once again, we used data from the annual EQAO provincial tests to rank the major Ontario English-speaking boards on the basis of the percentage of their students that met or exceeded the provincial standard (achieved level 3 or 4). The resulting table is below.

For the grade 3 and 6 tests, the score for each board was calculated exactly as it was last year, namely by averaging the average percentage of grade 3 students who met or exceeded the standard in reading, writing, and math with the average percentage of grade 6 students who did the same. The boards are listed in rank order. The second column shows the average percentage of successful students and the third column shows the difference between last year's average and this year's. As a whole, the grade 3 and grade 6 students improved by an average 2.16 percentage points.

To find out how many of the province's students are succeeding at grade 9 math, we multiplied the number of students in each group by the percentage of students who met or exceeded the provincial standard, added the two products together, and divided the sum by the total number of students. For example, here are the calculations for the province: $(50,687 \times .35 + 103,412 \times .71) \div 154,099 = 59.16\%$. The fourth column shows the percentage of successful students and the fifth column shows each board's rank compared to the other school boards. As a whole, the province's English-speaking grade 9 students gained 4.67 percentage points over last year.

There is, unfortunately, no way of knowing whether the rise in the results indicates a real improvement in student learning. The problem is that variations from year to year in the test itself, the test conditions, and the grading of the test can significantly influence test scores. Nancy Wagner's letter to the editor in this newsletter lists a few of the known changes to test conditions (all making it easier to pass). The available data do not allow us to know whether the slightly higher test scores are the result of real improvements in student learning or variations in the way the learning was measured.

While we should take the apparent improvement in test scores with a grain of salt, this is not the case when it comes to the results of the Catholic school boards. Catholic students are doing much, much better than public school students. In fact, all but three public boards got below-average results on the grades 3 and 6 tests.

What are the Catholic boards doing differently? Is someone looking into this amazing phenomenon? Should we be advising parents to convert to the Catholic faith and move to Stratford (Perth-Huron Catholic School Board)?

2005—2006 Grade 3, 6, and 9 EQAO Tests

	School Board	Grades 3 & 6		Grade 9	
		Passed	Change	Passed	Rank
1	Huron-Perth Catholic	75.50%	+1.33%	70.50%	4
2	York Region Catholic	75.33%	+4.16%	69.49%	6
3	Halton Catholic	72.67%	+2.67%	71.09%	1
4	York Region Public	71.50%	+1.83%	70.57%	3
5	Wellington Catholic	69.00%	+4.50%	68.60%	10
5	Niagara Catholic	69.00%	+3.67%	62.46%	26
7	Hamilton-Went Catholic	68.67%	+3.17%	60.78%	29
8	Kenora Catholic	68.33%	+9.33%	67.69%	11
9	Thunder Bay Catholic	68.00%	+6.00%	63.69%	22
10	Ottawa-Carleton Catholic	67.33%	+2.83%	61.70%	27
11	Waterloo Catholic	67.00%	+3.83%	65.99%	15
11	Renfrew Catholic	67.00%	+6.33%	66.46%	14
13	Durham Catholic	66.67%	+4.67%	49.87%	56
13	London Catholic	66.67%	+1.67%	69.13%	7
13	St. Clair Catholic	66.67%	+2.50%	54.15%	46
16	Brant/Hald/Nor Catholic	66.50%	+7.33%	63.94%	20
16	Peel Public	66.50%	+4.67%	59.29%	32
18	Windsor-Essex Catholic	66.17%	+2.17%	60.68%	30
19	Pet/Vic/Nor/Cla Catholic	66.00%	+6.83%	57.35%	40
20	Halton Public	65.17%	+0.67%	70.60%	2
21	Toronto Catholic	64.83%	+6.00%	55.70%	44
22	East/Ontario Catholic	64.67%	+6.17%	58.79%	34
	Province	63.33%	+2.16%	59.16%	
23	Bruce-Grey Catholic	62.83%	+2.50%	69.56%	5
24	Northwest Catholic	62.50%	+4.83%	NA	
25	Simcoe-Musk Catholic	62.33%	+2.66%	51.74%	52
26	Upper Grand Public	62.17%	+0.17%	63.32%	24
27	Durham Public	62.00%	+1.33%	58.02%	35
27	Toronto Public	62.00%	+1.50%	50.44%	53
29	Renfrew County Public	61.67%	+5.34%	64.84%	17
30	Kawartha/PineR Public	61.50%	+3.17%	57.61%	39
30	Keewatin/Pat Public	61.50%	+7.00%	54.05%	47
32	Dufferin-Peel Catholic	61.33%	-1.50%	62.96%	25
32	Niagara Public	61.33%	+0.83%	52.41%	50
34	Algonquin/Lake Catholic	61.17%	+3.84%	69.08%	8
35	Thames Valley Public	61.00%	+4.33%	64.51%	18
36	Huron-Superior Catholic	60.83%	+6.66%	55.35%	45
37	Ottawa-Carleton Public	60.67%	+1.00%	65.42%	16

37	Greater Essex Public	60.67%	+4.50%	63.66%	23
39	Waterloo Region Public	60.50%	+1.83%	60.39%	31
40	Bluewater Public	60.33%	+0.66%	64.32%	19
40	Nipissing/PS Catholic	60.33%	+11.50%	61.34%	28
40	Avon Maitland Public	60.33%	-1.17%	68.97%	9
43	Rainy River Public	60.17%	-2.66%	51.94%	51
43	Superior North Catholic	60.17%	+4.67%	NA	
45	Lamb/Kent Public	59.67%	+0.50%	57.90%	37
46	Upper Canada Public	59.33%	-1.17%	55.80%	43
47	Limestone Public	59.17%	+1.84%	56.65%	42
48	Lakehead Public	57.83%	+1.00%	53.53%	48
49	Superior/Green Public	57.67%	+4.50%	56.68%	41
50	Rainbow Public	57.50%	+5.33%	59.00%	33
51	Algoma Public	57.00%	-1.67%	57.73%	38
52	Trillium/Lake Public	56.83%	-1.50%	63.90%	21
53	Hamilton-Went Public	56.67%	+1.00%	52.89%	49
54	Sudbury Catholic	56.33%	-0.67%	66.83%	13
55	Simcoe County Public	56.17%	+1.34%	49.95%	55
56	Hastings-PrinceEd Public	54.67%	+1.34%	67.32%	12
56	Grand Erie Public	54.67%	+0.67%	57.92%	36
58	Northeastern Catholic	54.00%	-0.50%	35.91%	58
59	Ontario NE Public	52.00%	-1.17%	45.45%	57
60	Near North Public	49.17%	1.17%	50.33%	54