

2003-2004 Grade 3 & 6 EQAO Tests

Rank	School Board	Passed	Change
1	York CDSB	68.33%	+3.00
2	Huron-Perth CDSB	67.50%	+12.33
3	York Region DSB	66.67%	+3.67
4	Halton CDSB	66.50%	+1.67
5	Thunder Bay CDSB	64.00%	+8.17
6	London CDSB	63.83%	+3.00
7	Windsor-Essex CDSB	61.67%	+2.83
8	Wellington CDSB	61.50%	+3.00
9	Upper Grand DSB	61.33%	+3.50
9	Waterloo CDSB	61.33%	+5.33
11	Renfrew CDSB	60.83%	+6.00
12	Niagara CDSB	60.67%	+3.00
13	Peel DSB	60.33%	+3.50
14	Halton DSB	60.00%	+3.67
15	Kenora CDSB	59.67%	+13.17
16	Hamilton/Went CDSB	59.50%	+2.00
17	St. Clair CSB	59.33%	+4.67
18	Ottawa/Carl CDSB	58.67%	+2.50
19	Northwest CDSB	58.33%	+4.00
19	Toronto CDSB	58.33%	+3.83
19	Toronto DSB	58.33%	+2.83
22	Dufferin-Peel CDSB	57.67%	+4.17
23	Durham CDSB	57.50%	+4.50
	Province	57.50%	+3.33
24	Avon Maitland DSB	57.00%	+6.50
24	Greater Essex DSB	57.00%	+5.17
24	Rainy River DSB	57.00%	+4.00
27	Niagara DSB	56.83%	+2.50
28	Waterloo Region DSB	56.67%	+5.67
29	Pet/Vic/Nor/Cla CDSB	56.50%	+2.33
30	Lambton Kent DSB	56.33%	+2.00
30	Sudbury CDSB	56.33%	+4.33
32	Durham DSB	55.33%	+4.00
33	Bluewater DSB	55.17%	+5.33
34	Thames Valley DSB	55.00%	+2.33
35	Kawartha/PineR DSB	54.67%	+2.50
36	Renfrew County DSB	54.50%	+7.67
37	CDSB of East Ontario	54.33%	+5.00
37	Superior North CDSB	54.33%	+4.50
39	Limestone DSB	53.83%	+3.83
40	Lakehead DSB	53.17%	+1.00
41	Brant/Hald/Nor CDSB	53.00%	+2.83
41	Rainbow DSB	53.00%	+3.50
43	Simcoe/Musk CDSB	52.83%	+4.17
43	Trillium/Lake DSB	52.83%	+1.33
43	Upper Canada DSB	52.83%	+5.33
46	Ottawa-Carleton DSB	52.50%	+1.67
47	Algonquin Lake CDSB	51.83%	+1.83
47	Bruce-Grey CDSB	51.83%	+0.33
47	Keewatin/Pat DSB	51.33%	+12.17
50	Grand Erie DSB	50.67%	+1.50
50	Superior/Green DSB	50.67%	+4.50
52	Ham/Went DSB	50.50%	+3.50
53	Ontario NE DSB	50.33%	+3.50
54	Hast/PrinceEd DSB	49.67%	-0.67
54	Simcoe County DSB	49.67%	+3.67
56	Algoma DSB	49.00%	+3.33
57	Northeastern CDSB	48.17%	+1.83
58	Huron-Superior CDSB	48.00%	+1.50
59	Near North DSB	47.50%	+3.67
60	Nipissing/PS CDSB	45.83%	-3.67

75 Percent Or Bust

Ontario student achievement is improving too slowly.
Malkin Dare

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

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. Also as usual, we used the EQAO's Method 1 as the basis for our rankings; Method 1 is based on the total number of students, as opposed to the total number of students who actually wrote the tests.

The boards are listed in rank order. The third column shows the average percentage of successful students and the fourth column shows the difference between last year's average and this year's.

As a whole, the English-speaking boards improved a modest amount. In 2002-2003, an average of 54.17% of students scored at or above the provincial standard. In 2003-2004, 57.5% of students were in this category. This is an increase of 3.33 percentage points.

One of the main promises of the Ontario Liberal Party (after no new taxes and a balanced budget) was "to see 75% of 12-year-olds reaching the provincial standard on province-wide reading, writing and math tests by 2008". For the record, 56.33% of grade 6 students passed the 2003-2004 tests, compared to 54.33% of grade 6 students last year, an increase of two percentage points. At this rate of improvement, it will take eight or nine years before 75% of students are successful on the tests. Even then, of course, a quarter of the children will still be in trouble.

The Liberal government points out that the exams were written only seven months after they took office in October 2003 and that there has not been time for their improvements to fully take hold. During this period, the government reduced class sizes in 1300 schools, hired 1100 more teachers, boosted funding by almost a billion dollars, and gave additional training to 15,500 teachers. Clearly, even smaller class sizes, much more money, many more teachers, and much more training are going to be needed.

To be fair, the government will be rolling out additional strategies – such as a literacy and numeracy secretariat, teacher mentoring, early screening, turnaround teams, and so forth. Unfortunately, every indication is that all of this activity will be based on the premise that "balanced literacy" and "constructivist" math are optimal teaching approaches; consequently, none of the new strategies is likely to work very well either.

Here are strategies that do not appear to be on the government's radar screen.

- Initiatives to provide teachers with research-based teaching programs and training in how to use them
- Standardized testing in kindergarten and grade 1 so that struggling students can be identified early and problems nipped in the bud
- Literacy and numeracy testing of teachers
- Protection of instructional time
- Lighthouse schools
- Open enrolment and reinstatement of the tax credit so that the parents of struggling readers can get help

Perhaps next year, if the Minister's policies of "peace and stability first, beyond that, co-operation" fail to jumpstart test score improvement, he might be willing to consider different strategies.