

Standardized Testing in Victoria County

By Lynn Hatfield

(The following excerpts have been taken from school newsletters and the 21-page "Report to Parents on the Performance of Parkview Public School Students on the 1994 Canadian Achievement Tests".)

In October 1994, Parkview Public School completed standardized testing with all students in grades three, four and five. Sessions were scheduled over the two-week period to conduct the series of tests which included:

- 40 minutes for reading tests which assess word analysis skills (phonics) and vocabulary development;
- 50 minutes for reading comprehension and spelling tests;
- 25 minutes for language mechanics (capitalization and punctuation);
- 35 minutes for language expression (sentence structure, paragraph organization); and
- 65 minutes for mathematics which included problem-solving and computation (adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing).

This annual testing program is helping us to improve programs and enhance student achievement. It provides information to assist teachers in grouping for instruction. It helps the school administration to determine the efficient use of resource staff and program priorities and monitor program effectiveness. The program ensures that all students' records contain a core of consistent objectives and evaluative information, and that parents have access to these data for their own child. Every student in grades three, four and five was tested with the Canadian Achievement Test (CAT/2). Our school's results are summarized below.

	Results at Grade 3.1	Results at Grade 4.1	Results at Grade 5.1
Reading	3.5	4.4	5.6
Spelling	3.6	3.8	5.3
Language	3.7	4.6	5.8
Mathematics	3.1	3.8	5.3
Total Battery	3.5	4.3	5.5

Scores were reported for every test, and individual reports were generated for each student. These provided a comprehensive record of test performance and were used to obtain general information about each student's strengths and weaknesses in key areas, as well as to indicate specific instructional objectives for program planning.

We shared all test scores for individual children with their parents at the time of the November interview after the interim report cards were received. They were also shared with the student at a teacher-student conference. Parents and students were told whether the level of performance for each objective tested was proficient, competent or low.

The work we are doing in our resource programs, the new programs in the classrooms, the increased time on task, the inclusion of parents as partners and a clear focus on academic excellence have resulted in an improvement in student outcomes. Although we expect the major gains to be seen over the next two years, we are pleased to see the first results of our concerted efforts.

Although all of our scores are at or above the local or national level, we are not complacent. Too many students are merely competent, not proficient. We have initiated major school-wide programs to monitor the acquisition of basic skills and to improve competencies in reading, spelling, arithmetic, grammar and language mechanics. Every available school budget dollar and human resource has been allocated for instructional purposes in the classroom.

We are encouraged by the improved performance of our Parkview students when they complete the primary division.

	1993-94 Scores at 4.1	1994-95 Scores at 4.1
Reading (Total)	3.7	4.4
Vocabulary	3.8	4.6
Comprehension	3.7	4.2
Spelling	3.5	3.8
Language Mechanics	3.7	4.6
Language Expression	3.8	4.6
Language (Total)	3.7	4.6
Math Concepts	3.7	4.3
Computation	3.6	3.7
Total Math	3.6	3.8
Total Battery	3.6	4.3

We recognize that standardized group tests do not assess the total curriculum, but they are objective measures which provide an indication of how we are doing in the basic skill areas compared to same-grade students across Canada. They also allow us to monitor improvements in instructional practice as a school and as a county.