

RECENT RESULTS HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT AND MEET ACHIEVEMENT TARGETS

In 2007, the Ontario government set a graduation rate target of 85 percent by the end of the 2010-2011 school year. Students must pass the Grade 10 Ontario School Literacy Test (OSSLT) to receive an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). If a student fails the OSSLT, they must complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OLC).

- Since 2007-2008, OSSLT results province-wide have shown a success rate of between 83-85 percent.

Results for tests at the other grade levels show either relative consistency in results or improvements in the past five years.

Given the trend of EQAO test results over the past five years, it is apparent that they do not serve their intended purpose of improving student outcomes.

CONCLUSION

EQAO standardized testing is NOT an effective use of financial resources by the government. The practice of standardized testing goes against modern, more progressive teaching methods of assessment and evaluation, and this form of government testing only serves to create social labels that can be harmful to many of our school communities. The financial resources dedicated to EQAO would be better spent providing additional support and resources to students in the classroom.

OSSTF/FEESO RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stop province-wide standardized testing at all grade levels in Ontario.
- Dissolve the Education Quality and Accountability Office.
- Enhance student success in the areas of literacy and numeracy by adding more caring adults into our schools.
- Remove all references to all EQAO test results from government resources, including those that are on the Internet.

EQAO AND GOVERNMENT STANDARDIZED TESTING



EDUCATION WATCH

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BACKGROUND

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was established in 1996 as an independent government agency whose mandate is to conduct province-wide standardized tests in public schools and report those results annually to the public. This agency is fully funded by the Government of Ontario. In 2011/12, the budget for EQAO was just over \$32 million.

OSSTF/FEESO has expressed ongoing concern with the use of standardized tests for students in the public education system and how results are both publicized and utilized by the provincial government.

STANDARDIZED TESTS VERSUS MODERN TEACHING PRACTICE

The government has implemented a number of initiatives in recent years to improve student success. These include: standardized assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures, Differentiated Instruction that individualizes teaching practice, and a focus on formative assessment that is frequent, ongoing and suits students' strengths and needs. Standardized testing, as a means to measure learning outcomes, runs counter-intuitive to these practices.

- Professional learning has focused on helping educators diversify teaching practices and move away from traditional testing methods
- EQAO tests reinforce the pressure to "teach to the test," rather than focusing on developing the critical thinking and problem solving skills that are necessary in today's knowledge-based economy

LITERACY AND NUMERACY RATES ARE VERY HIGH

Canada has among the highest literacy and numeracy rates in the world. Study after study over the past twenty years indicates that literacy rates in our country have steadily improved and are now very close to 100 percent. Targeting government resources in areas such as critical thinking, problem solving and numeracy, are a better use of public funds.

MORE RESOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM TO SUPPORT LITERACY AND NUMERACY

The funds allocated annually to EQAO can be diverted to more effectively support students who struggle with literacy and numeracy. Teachers and education workers who interact daily with their students are in a better position to identify those children who require additional support.

Assessment, evaluation and reporting is an integral part of the work that teachers and education workers perform every day using a variety of methods:

- Provincial standardized report cards
- Communication with parents
- Dialogue with colleagues and professionals
- Implementation of Individual Education Plans
- Varied and individualized teaching and assessment techniques

Education workers provide the best means of measuring student achievement.

EFFECTIVE USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Ontario stakeholders have an expectation that resources devoted to public education be used effectively to produce positive outcomes for students. The EQAO tests serve as a one-time snapshot of achievement and do not improve student outcomes over the long-term.

The annual funding currently spent on EQAO can be better allocated to other important educational resources, including more education workers and student support professionals. Rather than spending millions of dollars each year on a testing regime that does little to improve student achievement and success, the money is better spent on classroom resources, including personnel who directly impact the lives of students.

