

APRIL 2005

Curriculum

Update

News and information
for Ontario's Educators

Presented by the Curriculum Implementation Partnership in cooperation with the Ontario Ministry of Education

WHAT'S INSIDE...

In this issue, province-wide efforts to close the literacy gap between girls and boys is explored. We also look at Notable Strategies, a new intermediate math resource and provide information on elementary reading, writing and math resources and professional development programs.

Also in this issue, we report on pilot projects that explore innovative ways to engage and retain at-risk students and hear from teachers whose schools participated in the Turnaround Team program. And once again, John Palbom gives us his review of several software packages.

If you would like to subscribe to Curriculum Update, or have comments or suggestions for future issues, see page 12 for contact and subscription information.

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Boys' Literacy in Focus

NEW LITERACY & MATH RESOURCES

LEARNING TO 18 – PATHWAYS PILOT PROJECTS

TURNAROUND TEAMS

BOYS' LITERACY: PROVINCE-WIDE INITIATIVE UNDERWAY

Boys' achievement in reading and writing has become the focus of international attention. Likewise, in Ontario, the gap between girls' and boys' performance in provincial and international assessments has sparked concern and prompted the launch of a province-wide initiative to improve boys' literacy skills.

80% of English-language girls who took the test for the first time passed compared to 73% of boys; 83% of French-language girls passed compared to 72% of boys.

The new initiative is consistent with the work underway through the Education Foundations program and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, which are focused on K-6 literacy achievement. Given the fundamental importance of reading and writing to overall school success, the K-12 focus of the boys' literacy initiative is also supportive of the Learning to 18 program, which is aimed at increasing the number of students remaining in school to age 18 (see page 9 for more on *Learning to 18*).

Still in its early stages, the initiative has a multi-pronged approach to address this complex issue, including:

- A symposium on boy's literacy, held in January, which showcased best practices from across Ontario and initiated system-wide dialogue on the subject (see *Highlight: 2005 Symposium on Boys' Literacy*).
- Publication of 'Me Read? No Way!' a resource for teachers that provides practical and effective classroom strategies for engaging boys to improve their literacy skills (see *In the classroom: Me Read? No Way!*).
- Establishment of a Boys' Literacy Advisory Team composed of Ontario educators who will explore the topic from a provincial perspective and share expertise and advice on recommended practices (see *Boys' Literacy Advisory Team*).

WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?

When it comes to boys and their reading and writing skills, the research is clear: provincial, national and international student assessments consistently reveal that boys do not perform as well as girls in reading and writing.

In Ontario, results show that the gap between girls and boys persists across all grade levels:

- EQAO Grade 3 and Grade 6 results for 2003-2004 show a significant gap between girls and boys, with 14% more girls achieving the provincial standard in Grade 6 reading across English-language boards and 16% across French-language boards.
- In the 2004 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), 80 percent of English-language girls who took the test for the first time passed compared to 73% of boys; 83% of French-language girls passed compared to 72% of boys.

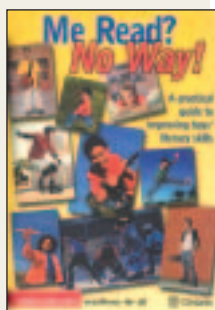
The gap is also seen in results of national and international tests including:

- The School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) 2000 writing assessment for 13 and 16 year old students (Canada)
- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000 for 15 year old students (international) and,
- The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) for Grade 4 students (international)

IN THE CLASSROOM:

Me Read? No Way!

Me Read? No Way! is a collection of practices and strategies that are being used in successful literacy programs for boys around the world.



The booklet was designed to provide teachers with practical techniques as well as:

- Supports, information, tips and ideas
- A wide variety of sources for more in-depth exploration
- Special features such as Quick facts, Best practices and Insight to make the text useable and accessible

Copies of the booklet were distributed to schools in January 2005. Additional copies can be ordered from the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Branch. An electronic version is available on the ministry website. Contacts:

Print: Sylvia.Larter@edu.gov.on.ca

Electronic:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/meread/index.html>

HIGHLIGHT: 2005 SYMPOSIUM ON BOYS' LITERACY

The 2005 Symposium on Boys' literacy brought together more than 500 Ontario educators – board administrators, Student Success Leaders, literacy leaders, school principals, and teachers with expertise in literacy learning – to begin a dialogue on boys' literacy.

Featured were several highly regarded experts in the field of boys' literacy, and more than 40 interactive workshops on a broad range of topics such as addressing masculinity in the language arts classroom, using school-based data to target interventions, developing a board-wide framework for literacy improvement and engaging parents as a critical link in literacy achievement.

BOYS' LITERACY ADVISORY TEAM: BUILDING PROVINCE- WIDE DIALOGUE

The Boys' Literacy Advisory Team, chaired by Barry Finlay, Associate Director of Halton District School Board, will share expertise on the subject across the province and gather province-wide perspectives on the issue of boys' literacy.

The purpose of the group is to:

- Raise awareness of boys' literacy issues
- Offer advice on resources and training
- Ensure coordination with provincial literacy and numeracy initiatives
- Support and coordinate with ESL/ESD and Special Education initiatives

Members of the Work Group include Directors and Associate Directors, Student Success Leaders, Principals, Supervisory Officers, Literacy Consultants, teachers, a teacher of aboriginal students, and representatives of EQAO and faculties of education.

Insight: Deepening understanding

Underlying the approach of the boys' literacy initiative – and the challenge of boys' literacy achievement – are a number of critical understandings and concepts:

Boys' literacy is an equity issue: it is not about excluding girls, but including boys

Boys are not homogeneous: in fact, differences among boys are greater than the differences between girls and boys

All students benefit: the educational approaches developed to improve boys' performance will also contribute to the success of girls

Ability follows attitude: the research demonstrates that improving boys' attitude toward reading and writing is a critical factor in developing their achievement

Boys' literacy is one component of a larger picture: boys' literacy issues, while critical, are only one component of the larger need to improve student achievement

Teachers make the difference: what teachers know – and can do – in the classroom is as important as gender or any other student characteristic

Research is the key: research and concrete evidence in the classroom are a critical foundation for effective improvement strategies

Teachers must be supported: support for professional development and sharing of best practices is fundamental to success

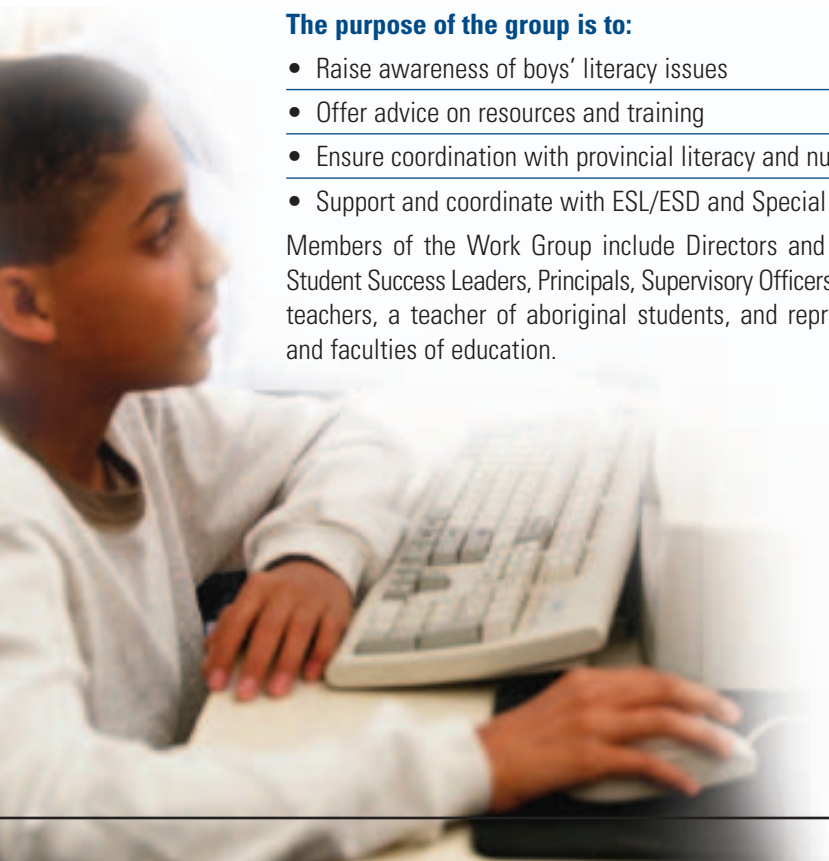
Boys' literacy is a shared commitment: ongoing learning about – and taking action toward – boys' literacy achievement requires strong collaboration at every level of the education system, as well as the genuine involvement of the family and community

BOYS' LITERACY AND SUCCESS: A PROFILE

Research indicates that literacy skills have a profound effect on boys' performance in all subjects, as well as their success in post-secondary education, the workplace, and their personal lives.

When compared with girls overall, boys:

- Are less likely to go to university
- Have higher dropout rates
- Are more likely to be placed in special education programs
- Take longer to learn to read
- Read less
- Provide lower estimations of their reading abilities
- Value reading as an activity less than girls
- Are more likely to declare themselves non-readers
- Express less enthusiasm for reading



TURNAROUND TEAMS:

Elementary literacy initiative expands to 100 Ontario schools

As a critical component of the Education Foundations program, designed to improve elementary literacy achievement across the province, 100 schools are receiving specialized training, resources and support through the new 'Turnaround Teams' initiative.

The new program is built on the lessons learned during an earlier demonstration program, Support for Schools that Need Extra Help, which began in 2001. Launched initially with 15 schools, the demonstration program grew to include a total of 43 schools, each of which participates over a three-year period.

The new initiative, and the earlier demonstration program, were designed not only to provide assistance to selected schools but also to develop a clearer profile of schools struggling in literacy and determine the most effective intervention strategies. It is also designed to address the issue of province-wide equity, by closing the gap between lower-achievement and higher-achievement schools.

Schools eligible to participate in the program are identified through EQAO results and selected in consultation with a steering committee and Directors of Education in each local board.

Once selected, a diagnostic team of literacy experts, including a diagnostician, an experienced principal and expert teacher, visits each school to:

- Perform a literacy audit identifying strengths and weaknesses in instructional practices, and gaps in resources
- Share successful instructional approaches, assessment and leadership strategies
- Provide ongoing one-on-one peer coaching and mentoring that addresses the unique challenges of each school

In response to the diagnostic report, a school improvement team, which includes the principal, teachers, school board, parent and community representatives, develops a school improvement plan and is responsible for its implementation. The school improvement plan identifies the strategies and actions to be undertaken, the required funding associated with each strategy, and the measures to be used as indicators of success.

Results of the demonstration program have been substantial, with 13 of the 15 original participating schools showing improvement in the Grade 3 EQAO reading assessment by an average increase of 37% (2004).

In this issue of Curriculum Update, we hear from two of the original demonstration schools about the program, its impact on the school, and the lessons learned.

TURNAROUND TEAMS IN ACTION:

École St Francis

Robert Demers, Principal
Chantal Bergeron, reading coach.



We're located in Tilbury, between Chatham and Windsor, in a French-language school. French is a minority language, so our continuing challenge is not only to teach literacy but to teach the language as well. We're surrounded by English language and culture, of course, and consequently 95 percent of students arrive with minimal French.

We're also in a mixed rural and industrial setting, with substantial number of social needs families, and a high proportion of IPRC students.

We were concerned about our EQAO results, prior to the program, and we were aware that a great deal of progress had been made in understanding how children learn to read. However, at the time, we did not have staff with specialized expertise in that area.

When the ministry came in for the initial diagnostic visit, the diagnostician observed each of our classrooms, our teaching, our timetabling and the resources we had available. Their report identified things we were doing well, as well as areas needing improvement and in response we developed a school improvement plan. We were given an open hand in how we approached the improvement and developed a plan around five key components.

First was the development of a local committee which included a superintendent, a parent from the school, and the parish priest. We felt it was important to involve the community in our plans and met with this group three times a year

throughout the initiative to review what we were learning through our research and to review the directions we were considering that research suggested might produce positive results.

The second major component was teacher training. Chantal, who has specialized expertise and background in teaching reading, actually came to us from another school to support and lead this program. She has provided ongoing professional development and, because she is on site, has been able to do individual follow-up with our teachers.

This has been very powerful; teachers attend training sessions and Chantal goes into each classroom a few days later to answer questions or concerns, observe the class, and perhaps do a model lesson if there is some component of the training the teachers needs to grasp more deeply. This, particularly when you have a teacher-leader who is passionate about teaching, is what keeps the program alive.

Third, we looked at our timetabling, with particular emphasis on developing a balanced and sustained reading program. For example, we

established a dedicated reading period for 20 minutes a day and similarly maintain a block period of literacy in the morning.

Having appropriate reading resources, of course, is critical. This was the fourth focus of our improvement plan. Chantal and a colleague have gone to book fairs on a number of occasions to source new French-language materials. And students are now quite anxious, on their return, to see what they've brought. It's important, too, not to simply drop new resources into libraries and classrooms but to promote them. When we do purchase resources, Chantal will visit each class and tell the students about the new books and materials to engage their interest.

One area we've paid attention to is providing appropriate resources for boys. It's relatively easy to find resources that will appeal to girls. The key for boys is to ask them: 'What do you read?' 'When do you read?' You need to connect reading with their lives and provide the kinds of material – both in terms of content and format – that will capture their interest. Boys, for example, sometimes tend to like reading shorter passages, so we've increased the number of magazines and books that present information in that particular way.

Our fifth focus has been on supporting parents in this process. Initially, this was a challenge. There was considerable reluctance on the part of parents to attend information sessions. The key, we found, was to develop school activities that excited the students, who in turn motivated the parents to come.

For example, we had a fashion show using books. Instead of presenting clothing on the runway, we presented books the students had read, and the students were dressed as characters in the books.

Struggling schools in Ontario: Who are they? Where are they?

- Chronically low-performing schools are present in all regions of the province, and cut across rural and urban, English and French, public and Catholic schools
- Many struggling schools have a high proportion of students from challenging family, community or economic circumstances, such as low socio-economic status, unstable home lives, highly transient populations, and remote geographical location
- Most boards have struggling schools, although the proportion is higher than average in some boards across the province
- Schools that are struggling to achieve the provincial standard in literacy are also typically struggling to meet the standard in mathematics

During these evenings, we will always include a direct parent information component. Parents are taken to a separate location to discuss what we're trying to accomplish and how they can become partners at home.

With this new approach, we're seeing 25 parents attend, instead of the 10 we might have expected in the past. And most importantly, we're seeing new faces, not just the core group of parents who always attend.

Are there challenges in creating a program like this? Yes. It takes a very dedicated group of teachers and an inspired leader to sustain this kind of effort. You need to work with a long-term vision, particularly because you know that perhaps you won't see results in the first year, maybe not even in the second. It's a process that will take years, not months.

In our case, our EQAO results actually dropped after the first year. Our improvement began in the second year and, today, after three years of work, the number of students reading at Level 3 or 4 has risen by 53% over the course of the program. Of course, there are other results that can't be measured and those are the ones you see in students' eyes. Students used to talk about sports. Now they talk about books. That's very gratifying.

Strategies that work: What we've learned

Experience in struggling schools has confirmed that effective intervention needs to be highly tailored to the unique needs of each school, its teaching staff, its community and student population. Successful intervention strategies have included a mix of:

- Shared leadership involving all teachers
- Shared planning time for all staff
- Literacy coaching
- Restructuring of the classroom environment
- Establishment of a common literacy block
- Development of a book-room
- Targeted and systematic professional development
- Effective use of data

Our challenge now is sustainability. We've worked closely with the board since the beginning and expect to continue doing so. Students change, teachers change, school leadership can change, so it's not an end result. It's a process. We're very pleased with the results we've been able to achieve and look forward to putting what we've learned into action, to sustain our success into the future.

TURNAROUND TEAMS IN ACTION:

St. Brigid school

Susan Nelan
Education Officer,
Turnaround Teams
Program
Former Special
Education Resource
Teacher, St. Brigid



We're an inner city school in Hamilton, working in a neighbourhood that has considerable socio-economic challenges. We work with a large immigrant population, and consequently have a high proportion of ESL students, and many parents who do not have a high level of literacy in English.

Prior to this program, I would have to say that we, as teachers, did not believe these children would be able to achieve more than they were. In speaking with other teachers, I've found that's a

typical feeling at the beginning of the program. I think there's a sense that we're doing everything we can. We were a very experienced teaching staff and we all felt very comfortable in teaching reading.

But when the diagnostic team came in, we really had to look at ourselves, take our focus off the community and the students, and look at what we were doing as teachers. Essentially, what we saw reflected in the diagnostic report was that we weren't teaching reading explicitly enough.

So we began by asking ourselves what are the 'look-fors' in teaching reading? What would you see in an effective classroom? We started looking at shared, guided, self-directed and home reading, and crafted a plan that would help us give children those kinds of experiences.

Initially, we developed a book room so that we would have access to the kinds of student reading materials we would need for the program. Our teachers also started reading books to improve their craft, as well as doing professional development.

We would attend professional development sessions as an entire division, so that we all heard the same message and could come back to the school and talk about how we were going to implement it. It was very much a team effort. We looked at shared reading and guided reading and we also looked at classroom management, which becomes critical when you have a small group of students engaged in guided reading.

So that first phase for us really revolved around new resources and supporting effective teaching in the classroom through book study and professional development. We saw a small improvement in our EQAO results the first year, and in the second year we didn't do well. We, therefore, had to re-examine what we were doing.

What we saw was a disconnect. Our children were reading at a very good level – their ability was improving greatly – but we discovered that their responses to what they read were not at the same level.

So we began looking at this issue of comprehension. Understanding what good readers do when they read and how we can explicitly teach that to students. A major component of that was group book study among the teaching staff. We would read a chapter, try it in our classrooms, and come back and share what we had experienced in the classroom. We were very much modelling for each other.

“
...this year, 60% of our students achieved at Level 3 or 4 in EQAO assessments, up from about 39%...
”

We started by having students understand that you make connections when you read. And we did this by modelling it ourselves. So we continued with the guided, shared and self-selected reading and introduced a component of read-aloud. Our teachers would read an appropriate selection to students and talk explicitly about how they personally connected with the reading. If, for example, it was a reading about celebrations, we would talk about celebrations in our own lives.

Now, this was remarkable. Typically, our students would say 'I don't know anything about that, I've never done that'. And at first, we believed them. We thought that perhaps these children really did have limited experience in their home and family lives. But all of a sudden, when we started sharing our own connections, a flood-gate opened. Suddenly, we were hearing 'I know about that, I know about this in my family'. The students started to make connections to the point that we're now teaching them how to infer, summarize, all the things good readers do.

This is our final year in the program and, this year, 60% of our students achieved at Level 3 or 4 in EQAO assessments, up from about 39% when we began.

What we're doing now is looking at the success factors and how to sustain this improvement. One success factor has been the involvement of the whole division. In some schools, EQAO is thought of as a Grade 3 or Grade 6 concern. We decided to work, through and with the EQAO booklets, across the entire primary division. Then, we took what we learned in primary, and we're applying that knowledge to junior and intermediate. So, the change has become a whole-school initiative.

The role of the principal is also key. For one thing, he or she is the motivator and cheerleader. Our principal, Dave Hansen, learned along with us. He took part in the professional development; he read the books we've read; he sat with us in our discussions; and he supported us. Anything we needed, he made sure we had access to it.

Teachers, of course, are the foundation of our success. At first, teachers were understandably concerned with the diagnostic process. What had to be stressed was that it was not the teachers who were being evaluated, it was the teaching program. That necessitated an important learning and trust-building process, which ulti-

mately resulted in teachers seeing the ministry staff as colleagues rather than adversaries. That took a lot of communication.

In regard to parents, many were not able to provide a great deal of help to their children, and that's an area – parental involvement – that we continue to work on.

“
...literacy is now a passion beyond anything we could have expected.
”

We've also worked closely with the board, which is going to be very important as we move forward to sustaining the program in future years.

For us, there have been many valuable lessons learned along the way. It's not about blaming the neighbourhood, the students, the parents, but about looking inside the school and seeing what kind of change needs to occur. That's one important lesson. The other is that, if you want children to learn anything, you need to teach them explicitly.

We're not teaching children to read. We're teaching them to be readers.

And that's something we've accomplished. We will have visitors in the classroom, perhaps to read to the children, and they'll be surprised to hear a student say 'I have a prediction about that story', or 'I think I know what's going to happen in that book, because I've read another book by the same author'.

This is very exciting. And for many of our teachers, literacy is now a passion beyond anything we could have expected.



INTERMEDIATE MATH SYMPOSIUM: CLOSING THE GAP

A mathematics symposium was held for Ontario educators as part of the launch of *'Notable Strategies: Closing the Gap'*, a new resource for intermediate teachers and education leaders.

Notable Strategies supports the implementation of effective mathematics programs in Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9 Applied, and combined Grades 7/8. The resource is integrated with the *'TIPS'* (Targeted Implementation and Planning Supports) resource released in December 2003 (see *At a glance: Intermediate math resources*).

Based on the work of the Expert Panel on Student Success in Ontario, which focused on Grades 7–12 mathematical literacy, Notable Strategies provides an in-depth exploration of two key teaching strategies contained in that report:

- Assessment for learning (see *Insight: Assessment for learning*)
- Differentiated instruction (see *Insight: Differentiated instruction*)

These two strategies are particularly critical to addressing the needs of students who are struggling. The strategies are supported within the resource by lessons that activate prior knowledge, diagnostic assessment tools and strategies, and samples of differentiated lesson plans for each grade level.

Notable Strategies: Closing the Gap is available in electronic form on the Ontario Curriculum Centre website at www.curriculum.org/occ/strategies/index.shtml

Leadership resources: Making connections

Notable Strategies: Closing the Gap provides extensive support to educational leaders – teachers, principals and professional learning facilitators – for planning and implementing effective mathematics programs. It sets out a detailed framework for program planning, demonstrates the connections between Ontario's mathematics initiatives and outlines key messages from research. Leadership resources on the OCC website include electronic presentations for educational leaders, with speaking notes and video clips.

Insight: Differentiated instruction

Students learn in different ways. It is important for teachers to incorporate a variety of instructional and assessment strategies in mathematics programs and lessons. This will ensure that all students have opportunities to learn and demonstrate their understanding (Strong, Thomas, Perini, & Silver, 2004).

Differentiated instruction does not include:

- Doing something different for every student in the class;
- Disorderly and undisciplined student activity;
- Using groups that never change, isolating at-risk students within the class;
- Never engaging in whole-class activities with all students doing the same thing.

Differentiated instruction does include:

- Using a variety of groupings to meet student needs;
- Providing some choice in instruction / assessment activities;
- Challenging students to an appropriate level, in light of their readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Source: *Leading Math Success* (p 51)



A Framework			
Curriculum Factors	Content (input)	Process (how)	Product (output)
Student Factors			
Readiness			
Interests			
Learning Profile			

Insight: Assessment *for* learning

Learning must be seen as gradual and incremental – as the process of closing the gap between a current level of performance and a desired level. For some students, this takes more time, more effort, and more feedback. A concurrent shift in thinking about assessment is also necessary. For many teachers, the kind of assessment that currently predominates is assessment of learning, used to report to parents that learning has (or has not) taken place. This is typically done at the end of a unit or course, and students receive feedback in the form of marks or grades.

Assessment for learning puts the focus on using diagnostic assessment immediately before learning and formative assessment in the middle of learning to plan and adjust instruction. The emphasis moves from making judgements to coaching students and planning the next steps in teaching and learning.

Source: *Leading Math Success* (p 50)

SOFTWARE REVIEW

JOHN PALBOM

John Palbom is the computer consultant for Trillium Lakelands School Board. He is also a member of the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC) and has extensive experience in the use of educational software as a teaching and learning tool.

Mathville Middle School Version 3.1

Mathville Middle School is a well-known software package that places students in a virtual village, and offers them opportunities for mathematics problem-solving. This new version retains many of the familiar features of the original, while adding new functionality.

Students complete mathematical calculations while working at various occupations. Money earned working can be spent at Mathville stores to buy groceries, hardware, games, sports, and clothing. Throughout the application, text-based hints help students understand the concepts developed in each activity.

Mathville Middle School provides students with the opportunity to reinforce many of the Grades 6 to 8 curriculum expectations. These are outlined, along with the corresponding activities, in the accompanying teacher's guide. Mathville Middle School promotes cooperative learning and can be used as a tool to differentiate classroom instruction.

Geometer's Sketchpad: take home rights for students

Geometer's Sketchpad is an open-ended software package that allows students to dynamically explore 2D geometry concepts.

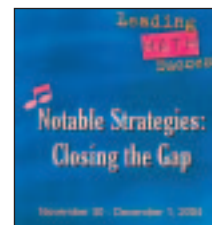
The software has been licensed for use in all Ontario schools for a number of years, but recently, the license agreement was extended to allow for student take home rights. Boards of education will soon receive additional copies of the student version, for distribution to schools.

In addition, a subscription for three years of web-based training for Geometer's Sketchpad was recently acquired on behalf of all Ontario schools. Details will be forwarded to school boards shortly.

AT A GLANCE:

Intermediate math resources

Notable Strategies



Support for educational leaders — teachers, principals, professional learning facilitators — in implementing effective mathematics programs. Find it on the

Ontario Curriculum Centre website at:
www.curriculum.org/occ/strategies/index.shtml

TIPS

TIPS (Targeted Implementation & Planning Supports) offers a comprehensive approach to planning and implementing Grades 7, 8, and 9 Applied Mathematics curriculum. Find it on the Ontario Curriculum Centre website at:

www.curriculum.org/occ/tips/index.shtml



Leading Math Success



The report of the Expert Panel on Student Success in Ontario, *Leading Math Success: Mathematical Literacy Grades 7-12*. Find it on the Ministry of Education website at:
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/numeracy/index.html

Where to find these software packages

You should find Mathville Middle School and Geometer's Sketchpad installed and available at your school. Ask your computer teacher for more information if you are unable to find these titles.

For more information about these and other licensed software packages, visit www.osapac.org and follow the software link.

Each year a wide variety of software titles is licensed by the Ministry of Education for use in publicly funded Ontario schools. Information on these titles is available through Ontario Educational Software Service (OESS) representatives at each board. To search for the OESS representative in your board, go to www.tvo.org/oess. To keep up to date on licensed software resources, visit the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC) website at www.osapac.org. It contains news on software releases, negotiations, an online survey and a complete database of licensed software titles with many links to the curriculum expectations and other resources. If you are Interested in profiling a software title for Curriculum Update, write us at editor@curriculum-update.info.

LEARNING TO 18:

Pilot projects explore new approaches to pathways

105 pilot projects have been launched across the province to explore new approaches to engaging and retaining students at risk of dropping out.

Specifically, the projects are intended to:

- reduce the dropout rate and encourage students to stay in school
- improve students' credit accumulation
- re-engage youth who have recently left school to encourage them to complete diplomas
- increase graduation rates

The projects, which vary widely in approach, will provide Ontario-specific models and best practices that can be implemented across the province. They range from expansions of pathways strategies already proven in schools and boards, to new, innovative programs. A strong research component has been established to ensure that the effectiveness of the pilot projects can be evaluated based on collected data.

Results will be tracked for two years following the 2004-2005 pilots, and will inform future initiatives that support student learning to the age of 18.

The initiative has sparked considerable discussion, and generated new ideas, quite apart from the funded initiatives, according to Student Success leaders, five of whom share their boards' pilot programs in this issue.

PILOT PROJECTS



Scott Corden
Student Success Leader
Upper Canada District
School Board

REALSkills

REALSkills is a joint venture with Kemptville College that gives students in our board, and the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, hands-on exposure to opportunities in the agri-food business, and several days of direct instruction at Kemptville College.

Students work through their home school and engage in a co-op opportunity in three of the areas in which the college specializes, such as food management, dairy herds person, heavy equipment operation, welding, horticulture and equine management.

Refurbishing Enterprise Adapting Computers for Homes (REACH)

A school-to-work program, REACH combines credits with work experience. Essentially, students run an enterprise that sources surplus computer equipment, refurbishes the computers, and provides them to families of elementary school children who would otherwise not have access to a computer.

The enterprise is intended to operate exactly as a business would. Students gain technical skills, and exposure to many other aspects of

business operation from office administration, marketing and promotion to data and financial management, and customer support.

Connections

Connections is a new program for Grade 9 students, who were identified in Grade 8 as at risk of not succeeding in the traditional classroom. Students are working toward credits for a diploma (OSSD), or a certificate (OSSC).

The program combines locally developed courses and Workways programs, providing students with an alternate classroom setting which is very active, hands-on and project oriented. An experiential learning component, which our Grade 9 students would not typically receive, has also been added to the program. Another feature of the program is that teachers work with the students as a team.

High School Opportunity Through Practical Experience (HOPE)

HOPE is a continuous intake co-op program designed to re-engage students who at mid-semester are not succeeding and, therefore, run the risk of dropping out. Students in HOPE have the opportunity to continue earning credits and re-engage in school, through meaningful co-op opportunities. The program is not 'advertised' - students don't choose the program, but instead are identified by guidance or classroom teachers.

Focus on Transition to Work (FTW)

FTW is a specialized program for students 16 years and older who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to stay in school. It combines construction technology training with essential literacy and numeracy skills and operates out of an independent site, which is connected with other community agencies.

The goal is that students will progress toward an Ontario Secondary School Certificate, become eligible for an apprenticeship program and make connections with work opportunities in the community.



Hazel Lambert
Student Success Leader
Ottawa-Carlton
Catholic District School
Board

Achievement Centres Program

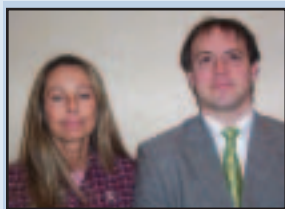
The Achievement Centres Program is a support for schools to help them design experiential learning programs and put effective remediation and interventions in place, with a focus on providing a very positive experience for students.

The Achievement Centre may be a cart with resources that moves from classroom to classroom - in Grades 7 and 8 for example. In a secondary setting, it might typically be an inviting physical space located front and centre in the school that is open to all students, not just

those who are struggling. If, for example, a gifted student has only three classes, and wants an extra credit, he or she can visit the Achievement Centre and take an online credit. Students are not labelled. They are being provided with alternative learning opportunities.

Schools that opt into the program receive extra staffing to help them with program development, talking to local employers, gathering speakers from the community, connecting with libraries, arranging career projects – the leg work that takes time and energy. When our work with the school is complete, our hope is that we've left behind a program that is sustainable.

An Achievement Centre was also established in Algonquin College for 16 to 18 year olds who had left school and did not have the credits to gain a diploma. Teaching staff and programming are provided and our students receive all the privileges of full-time Algonquin students, including access to facilities, guidance services, and technology support.



Yves Laliberté
Student Success Leader

Johanne Boisvenu-Blondin
*Cooperative Education Coordinator
Conseil scolaire du district
catholique du Nouvel-Ontario*

Alternate Site School-Work Transition Program

This program is geared to struggling students who want to earn a diploma before entering the work place but have a limited access to workplace preparation level courses or to an engaging, quality, robust school-to-work transition program.

The Grade 12 program is located at Collège Boréal. It's a centralized adult setting serving a number of feeder schools and offers an appropriate environment for these students. There are no bells – none of the typical structure of a secondary school classroom. What it offers is an environment that is stimulating, engaging and allows them to see new possibilities.

Students enrolled in the program have the opportunity to complete a secondary school diploma, with the added benefit of industry certification, work experience and other forms of experiential learning.

A Grade 11 program, established with a similar setting and structure at Cambrian College, provides specialized opportunities in hospitality and tourism and pilots the new Navigating the Workplace (GLN40) course.

In both cases, an integrated approach, combining interdisciplinary workplace preparation credits with co-op placement, is used and has proven to be very successful. Of the 9 students enrolled in the first Grade 12 program, three are registered as apprentices – one in early childhood education and one in small engines. A third student is enrolled in a teacher's aid program. The program is expanding and we are refining our ability to identify students who would be well-served by this approach, in order to provide a pathway to success for all students.



Bev Inglis
*Student Success Leader
Near North District
School Board*

Success Through Alternative Routes (S.T.A.R.)

STAR is an alternative secondary school program offered in the Parry Sound area and serves struggling students who are disengaged or students who have left the system for a variety of reasons.

The program involves five areas of programming including a supportive class for 14 to 16 year olds at Parry Sound High School, two small off-campus classes, co-op placements and virtual learning.

In addition to helping students gain credits, the program provides a wide range of co-op opportunities through community partners and emotional and social supports. The program is very flexible, which enables students to engage in the program as their life situations and schedules allow.

Trades and Technology Program

This is a construction technology program geared to students who are interested in the trades. Many students will obtain apprenticeships or enter the workplace directly. Others will choose to continue their studies in one of the technical trades at Canadore College.

During the first semester, the students are based in a high school where they take an integrated package that allows them to build their literacy and numeracy skills, gain credits, and learn valuable job skills. In the second semester, they move to Canadore College to work on projects such as sheds and garages. In May, they are placed in a full time co-op program with employers associated with the construction industry.

The program is designed to help these students work toward graduation, provide a sense of

accomplishment and enable them to experience success.

Warton District High School Senior Alternative Program

This program uses a credit recovery model to deliver flexible, individualized learning programs. Two teachers deliver programming options, which include English, Mathematics, Hairstyling and Aesthetics, Navigating the Workplace, Co-op and/or Technical Studies. Students also receive a greater degree of personal attention. The program operates on a continuous intake basis.

Modular Learning Centre

The Modular Learning Centre is a credit-earning program specifically geared to at-risk senior students.

Courses are divided into modules so that students can complete each course step-by-step in small, digestible pieces. Students receive individual attention and learn at their own pace in a supportive environment.

Dramatic Arts Cooperative Education

Targeted at Grade 9 and 10 students who are struggling with the academic program, this program uses dramatic arts and cooperative education to enhance students' employability, self-esteem, sense of belonging and cooperation.

Again, a non-traditional classroom setting is established, with a single teacher, less sitting at a desk, more hands-on activity, and more one-on-one attention. The program is an alternative for those students who are at risk of dropping out and provides an environment in which they can engage and succeed.

Hospitality and Tourism Program

We have had a long-standing relationship with Talisman Mountain Resort to provide students with a variety of co-op opportunities, such as working in the ski shop.

We are now expanding the existing culinary arts program to open a second kitchen for students who want co-op credits in Hospitality and Tourism. The program also offers students exposure to a potentially rewarding career path.

NEW RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Sustaining Quality Curriculum

The first pilot year subjects of the Sustaining Quality Curriculum (SQC) process are completed and scheduled for implementation in schools in the fall of 2005. Through the SQC initiative, launched in February 2003, each subject area within the Ontario curriculum undergoes a review process every five years.

Curriculum documents

The revised curriculum documents for *Canadian and World Studies, Grades 9 and 10* and *Canadian and World Studies, Grades 11 and 12* have been posted in the 'publications' section of the ministry website at www.edu.gov.on.ca. Printed copies of the documents are being distributed to schools and boards in the spring of 2005.

The first pilot subject *Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6*, and *History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8* was completed in June 2004.

Implementation of the *Revised Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6*, *History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8*, and the *Revised Canadian and World Studies, Grades 9 and 10* and the *Revised Canadian and World Studies, Grades 11 and 12* begins September 2005.

Curriculum documents for the SQC year one subjects, *Revised Mathematics, Grades 1 to 8*, and the *Revised Mathematics, Grades 9 and 10* curriculum policy documents are also scheduled for completion in the Spring of 2005, and for implementation in the classroom in the Fall of 2005.

Professional development

Professional development in all six districts for the *Revised Social Studies/History and Geography Grades 1 to 8*, the *Revised Canadian and World Studies, Grades 9 and 10*, and the *Revised Grades 11 and 12* curriculum policy documents, is currently underway.

Professional development training in all six districts for the *Revised Mathematics* curriculum, *Grades 1 to 8* and *Grades 9 and 10* begins in April of 2005.

School boards have the opportunity to send up to eight staff to each of the training sessions.

The district training sessions address a variety of topics including:

- Overview of changes in the revised curriculum
- Review of changes in the Achievement Chart
- Exemplar tasks
- Background on First Nation/Aboriginal perspectives
- Antidiscrimination education in the revised curriculum

Participants are provided with information and materials to conduct local board and school training to support the implementation of the revised curriculum.

New elementary literacy/numeracy support

A wide variety of literacy and numeracy supports are being developed for JK to Grade 6 teachers, including print and web-based resources, and province-wide professional development programs. Development of these support programs began in the 2004-05 school year, and will continue through 2005-06.

PRINT RESOURCES

Literacy

Release Date	Resource
September 2004	A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, Kindergarten to Grade 3 Guide de l'enseignement efficace de la lecture, de la maternelle à la 3 ^e année
October 2004	Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario La littératie au service de l'apprentissage, Rapport de la Table ronde des experts en littératie de la 4 ^e à la 6 ^e année

Numeracy

September 2004	A Guide to Effective Instruction in Mathematics, JK to Grade 3: Number Sense and Numeration Guide de l'enseignement efficace des mathématiques, de la maternelle à la 3 ^e année – Géométrie et sens de l'espace
October 2004	Teaching and Learning Mathematics: The Report of the Expert Panel on Mathematics in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario Enseigner et apprendre les mathématiques, Rapport de la Table ronde des experts en mathématiques de la 4 ^e à la 6 ^e année
January 2005	A Guide to Effective Instruction in Mathematics, JK to Grade 3 (Pedagogical Guide) Guide de l'enseignement efficace des mathématiques, de la maternelle à la 3 ^e année (Guide pédagogique)



WEB-BASED E-LEARNING RESOURCES

Literacy

Release Date	Resource	Distribution
Fall 2004	Running Records Observation Individualisée Gradation des livres	Available on e-Workshop website produced and hosted in partnership with TFO/TVO. www.e-workshop.on.ca or www.atelier.on.ca
Winter/Spring 2005	Shared Reading	Available on e-Workshop website produced and hosted in partnership with TFO/TVO. www.e-workshop.on.ca or www.atelier.on.ca

Numeracy

Fall 2004	Quantity Counting and Representation Propriétés des formes géométriques	Available on e-Workshop website produced and hosted in partnership with TFO/TVO. www.e-workshop.on.ca or www.atelier.on.ca
Winter/Spring 2005	Operational Sense Interrelations (French)	Available on e-Workshop website produced and hosted in partnership with TFO/TVO. www.e-workshop.on.ca or www.atelier.on.ca

Professional development

Regional team capacity building sessions in literacy and numeracy were held from November 2004 through March 2005. Board-based capacity building sessions began in January 2005, and continue this spring. Spring 2005 sessions are highlighted below:

BOARD TEAM CAPACITY BUILDING SESSIONS

Lead Board	Language	Description	Date of event
Huron-Perth Catholic DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Literacy & Numeracy (5 days)	April 18 – 22, 2005
York Catholic DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Literacy & Numeracy (5 days)	April 11 – 15, 2005
Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Literacy (5 days)	April 11 – 15, 2005
Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Numeracy (5 days)	April 25 – 29, 2005
Rainy River DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Literacy & Numeracy (5 days)	April 18 – 22, 2005
Upper Grand DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Literacy (5 days)	April 11 – 15, 2005
Upper Grand DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Numeracy (5 days)	April 18 – 22, 2005
Trillium Lakelands DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Literacy (5 days)	April 18 – 22, 2005
Trillium Lakelands DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Numeracy (5 days)	May 1 – 6, 2005
Rainbow DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Numeracy (5 days)	April 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 2005
Rainbow DSB	Eng	Grades 4 – 6 Literacy (5 days)	April 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 2005

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