



## UPPER GRAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### Program Services

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PGM 2010-53  
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**Memorandum To:** Martha Rogers, Director of Education

**From:** Heather Boswell, Superintendent of Program  
Bonnie Talbot, Principal of Program  
Christina Schilling, Curriculum Leader, Secondary  
Paul Costa, Curriculum Leader, Secondary

**Re:** **Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)  
Preliminary Results April 2010**

**Report Classification:** Information

### Background

The **Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)** is administered annually to Grade 10 students and others who have not yet met the literacy standard for graduation. The test was administered on the morning of April 8, 2010 and was written in two sessions (seventy five minutes each).

When interpreting the results of the OSSLT, EQAO cautions:

“Exercise caution when interpreting results for small boards. Results may vary considerably from year to year, and differences may look exaggerated.”  
(Detailed Board Report, June 3, 2009).

The OSSLT is designed to assess reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned across all subjects by the end of Grade 9, as outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*. Successful completion of the OSSLT is one of the thirty-two requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

The standard for passing the OSSLT is established through a rigorous process that involves a panel of assessment experts, educators, and community representatives.

All system partners in the Upper Grand District School Board focus on the preparation of students for the test so that they may approach the task with confidence. All secondary schools have literacy teams in place to assist students. School Improvement Plans include goals for improved student achievement in literacy. Professional Learning Communities are established at the school level to discuss strategies for assisting students who struggle to learn and to incorporate EQAO data in their strategic planning. In 2010, all secondary

schools piloted the Ontario Comprehension Assessment (OCA). The OCA is a diagnostic tool used to assess reading comprehension difficulties and devise strategies for next steps and remediation. In addition, the Literacy Sub-Committee for Student Success coordinates literacy initiatives including the Smart Start after-school literacy course, literacy mentor training to support targeted groups of students, and regular meetings of the OSSLC (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course) teachers.

### **Issues**

- To present the results of **The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, Upper Grand District School Board, April 2010** for review and consideration
- To provide preliminary analysis of the results

Provincial results are not released to the public until June 16, 2010. Further analysis will follow at a later meeting, if requested.

### **Recommendation**

That the Board receives the report entitled, **The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), Preliminary Results April 2010**, dated June 8, 2010.

### **Determining Results**

1. EQAO determines results in two ways:

**All Eligible Students (M1):** This method of reporting provides percentages based on all students in the cohort who are working toward an OSSD. The only students excluded are those who are not working toward an OSSD (exempt students).

**Fully Participating Students (M2):** This method of reporting provides percentages based on students for whom there is work for both sessions of the administration of the OSSLT and who were assigned an achievement result (successful, not successful). Students who are not working toward an OSSD, those who were absent, and those who were deferred are excluded.

2. As of 2004, EQAO no longer includes separate reading and writing results in the *Detailed School Results* provided to boards.

**Participation Data of all First-Time Eligible Students (M1)**

<b>Participation Data</b>	<b>Province 2008-09</b>	<b>UGDSB 2008-09</b>	<b>Province 2009-10</b>	<b>UGDSB 2009-10</b>
Total number of students working toward a diploma	152 830	2662	153 490	2701
Percentage of eligible students who fully participated	93%	94%	93%	94%
Percentage of students absent	2%	3%	2%	4%
Percentage of students deferred	4%	3%	5%	2%

*(Percentages may not add up to 100, due to rounding)*

**Demographic Overview of (M1) -  
First Time Eligible Students in the UGDSB**

	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	
Gender	female male	49% 51%	46% 54%
English Language Learners	2%	1%	
Identified students With Special Needs (excluding gifted)	14%	15%	
Identified students With Special Needs Receiving Accommodations (excluding gifted)	13%	12%	
Programs of Study*	Academic Applied Locally Developed English as a Second Language Other	61% 30% 5% 2% 2%	62% 30% 6% 1% 2%
Demographic information is provided by schools and/or boards through the <b>Student Data Collection</b> process.			

**OSSLT Results - all First-Time Eligible (M1) in the UGDSB**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	79%	81%	78%	80%
Not Successful	14%	13%	15%	14%
Absent	2%	3%	2%	4%
Deferred	4%	3%	5%	2%

*(Percentages may not add up to 100, due to rounding)*

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating, First-Time Eligible (M2) in the UGDSB**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	85%	86%	84%	85%
Not Successful	15%	14%	16%	15%

*(Percentages may not add up to 100, due to rounding)*

**OSSLT Success Rates Results - all Previously Eligible (M1) in the UGDSB**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	31%	33%	28%	32%
Not Successful	27%	27%	27%	26%
Absent	11%	13%	12%	20%
Deferred	11%	13%	13%	9%
Opting for the OSSLC	19%	15%	20%	13%

*(Percentages may not add up to 100, due to rounding)*

**OSSLT Success Rates Results -  
Fully Participating, Previously Eligible (M2) in the UGDSB**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	54%	55%	51%	56%
Not Successful	46%	45%	49%	44%

*(Percentages may not add up to 100, due to rounding)*

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), First-Time Eligible, by Gender**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Female	88%	91%	88%	88%
Male	82%	82%	81%	83%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), First-Time Eligible,  
English Language Learners**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	66%	77%	63%	71%
Not Successful	34%	23%	37%	29%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), First-Time Eligible,  
Special Needs (excluding gifted)**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	55%	55%	54%	48%
Not Successful	45%	45%	46%	52%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), First-Time Eligible,  
Level of Study - Academic**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	96%	98%	95%	98%
Not Successful	4%	2%	5%	2%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), First-Time Eligible,  
Level of Study - Applied**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	62%	70%	60%	71%
Not Successful	38%	30%	40%	29%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), First-Time Eligible,  
Level of Study - LDCC**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	21%	28%	19%	14%
Not Successful	79%	72%	81%	86%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), First-Time Eligible,  
Level of Study - ESL/ELD**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	53%	n/r	46%	n/r
Not Successful	47%	n/r	54%	n/r

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), Previously Eligible, Gender**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Female	57%	60%	55%	62%
Male	51%	52%	48%	51%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), Previously Eligible,  
Special Needs (excluding gifted)**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	39%	35%	37%	40%
Not Successful	61%	65%	63%	60%

**OSSLT Results - Fully Participating (M2), Previously Eligible,  
English Language Learners**

	Province 2008-09	UGDSB 2008-09	Province 2009-10	UGDSB 2009-10
Successful	50%	57%	42%	45%
Not Successful	50%	43%	58%	55%

## **OSSLT Release Dates, 2010:**

### **May 31**

- Preliminary Student Summary (available to directors and principals)

### **June 8**

- Application to submit an appeal will be available to principals

### **June 9**

- Highlights of the Provincial Results
- Detailed School and Board results (confidential until June 16)

### **June 15**

- Detailed school and board results (confidential until June 16)
- Public reports: school and board results (confidential until June 16)
- *Summary of Results over Time* (available to directors)
- Profile of strengths and areas for improvement reports

### **June 16**

- Public Reports: School and Board Results

### **June 21-25**

- Individual Student Reports

### **June 23**

- Item Information Reports: Student Roster (available to principals)
- Files containing data from student roster reports (available to directors)
- Profile of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Report
- Results for students with special needs and students receiving accommodations
- Tracking a cohort's achievement (available to principals and directors)
- Detailed results for aboriginal students

## **Analysis of Board Results**

The Upper Grand District School Board will closely monitor the progress of the following groups of students:

- ▶ Special Education students who have been identified through the IPRC process (Identification Placement and Review Committee)
- ▶ Special Education students who have been provided with accommodations on an IEP (Individual Education Plan)

- ▶ English Language Learners in ESL (English Second Language) Program
- ▶ Students in Applied and Essentials (Locally Developed) courses
- ▶ Previously Eligible Students

Please note: EQAO results do not indicate the number of times each student writes the test. However, school principals and literacy teams track the progress of individual cohorts to provide appropriate remediation, counseling, and intervention.

## **Improvement Strategies**

### **1. Planning and Using Information**

- Data analysis provides early identification and tracking of at-risk students. Timely and effective intervention follows. Many secondary schools run mock literacy tests to assess and remediate student weaknesses in literacy before the OSSLT.
- The Program Department encourages the use of EQAO Item Information Reports at both school and board levels to reflect on strengths and gaps. Data is collated for schools and training is provided for the purpose of strategic analysis and planning.
- School Improvement Plans focus on student achievement, particularly in critical areas like literacy, numeracy, instruction and assessment for learning.

### **2. Building Capacity and Expertise**

- Reading and writing skills are identified in all subjects, and explicit instruction is provided. Schools create subject embedded reading activities using OSSLT templates.
- The 2009-10 school year has had a focus on reading. Each secondary school has piloted the Ontario Comprehension Assessment diagnostic tool for assessing reading comprehension. Strategies and next steps are developed in teams to assist struggling students. Secondary teachers of locally developed and applied courses attended a workshop in May entitled, "Learn how to teach reading." Teachers have been using strategies from the Ministry GAINS resource, "Me Read? And How!"
- School literacy teams develop cross-curricular literacy initiatives that focus on best practices in literacy, assessment, numeracy, and instruction (e.g., *Think Literacy: Cross-Curricular Approaches and Education for All*).
- Schools follow a student-centered assessment for learning philosophy that involves students in the process of setting learning goals.

- Exemplary assessment and evaluation practice exist in classrooms, such as ongoing formative assessment, separation of learning skills from achievement, and the use of exemplars to help students understand tasks.
- Teachers of three secondary schools met in cross-panel groups with their feeder schools to discuss positive transitions and course continuums.

### **3. Targeting and Supporting Students At-Risk**

- Opportunities exist for students to share and support opinions, and to make connections between personal experiences and new learning.
- Preparation for the OSSLT is systematic and thorough. Schools ensure careful preparation of students for the test, by using EQAO *Support Materials*, by having literacy mentors work directly with Special Needs and ESL students as well as those in Applied and Locally Developed courses, by providing remediation for students who rewrite the OSSLT and by offering the UGDSB *Smart Start After-School Literacy Program*.
- The OSSLC is offered to students who were unsuccessful on the OSSLT.
- Summer school and after-school opportunities are available, e.g., the *Up and Over* Grades 7 and 8 literacy program and the *That Figures* Grades 7 and 8 math program.
- Schools identify students who struggle in school and establish innovative programs to support learning and to celebrate success.
- The Program Department provides training and support for teachers to meet needs of all students through Differentiated Instruction and Assessment for Learning.

### **4. Implementing Technology**

- Software such as *Reading and Writing Achievement (R.W.A)*, *Academy of Reading*, and assistive technology such as the Kurzweil Reader, Inspiration, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Word Cue, Co-Writer, Write Out Loud, Classroom Suite and Smart Ideas for students with special needs are used to assist learning.
- Ongoing professional development assists teachers in understanding new, integrated technologies including Interactive Smart Board training and Web 2.0. and classroom applications such as literacy wikis for collaborative student work.

## **5. Collaboration with Education and Community Partners**

- Clear information about literacy development is provided to all system partners, including parents, the Board, the Special Education Advisory Committee, Elementary and Secondary Administrators and the Student Success Steering Committee.
- School administrators demonstrate their belief in success for all students, encouraging teachers, students, and parents to explore and value a wide variety of career pathways.
- Discussion about best practice in schools is purposeful and lively. It involves students, School Councils, parents, classroom teachers, administrators, Special Education staff, and members of both the elementary and secondary panel.
- Guidance and career courses involve students in discussions relating to employability and invite parents and community partners to help students establish realistic goals.

### **The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC)**

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) is a full-credit Grade 12 course offered as part of the English program in Ontario secondary schools. The course provides students who have been unsuccessful on the test with intensive support in achieving the required reading and writing competencies and with an alternative means of demonstrating literacy skills. Students must have been unsuccessful on the OSSLT to qualify for this course. With the support of literacy teachers, students are encouraged to demonstrate literacy competency in a classroom setting. Students who successfully complete the OSSLC will meet the provincial literacy requirement for graduation and will earn one senior English credit.

### **Summary**

Despite good results for both academic and applied level students, it is from the data, that we find that we have an area where we need to rise to meet the challenge, namely, our LDCC students and students with special needs. Often, students in the LDCC classes are the same students who have special needs. This year, our focus was on helping previously eligible students and we had great success. This will continue to be a group requiring the special effort. We will use our knowledge to help students in our LDCC who will be writing the test for the first time.

## **Rationale**

The release of the results of the 2010 OSSLT provides important information for the system and its schools. The information offers an opportunity to conduct an analysis of the results in order to identify best instructional practices, which in turn should prompt the best possible student achievement. The collection and preliminary reporting of the data is the necessary first step in the process of critical analysis.

The next step in this process will be to continue the identification of areas of focus. Groups such as the Literacy Sub-Committee of the Student Success initiative, school literacy teams, and Curriculum Leaders will use these areas to direct efforts. Planning for increased student success will then occur at both the school and system level, in alignment with the Board's Literacy framework.