

FOREWORD

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I am pleased to present *Inspiration & Celebrations: Strategies That Work — Tools, Tips & Techniques from Ontario Educators for Supporting Student Achievement*, a compilation of the success stories that EQAO has collected from Ontario schools since 2003. Since these stories portray schools as they were when EQAO conducted its original interviews with school staff and administrators, they may not reflect all of the continued innovation nor the exceptional educators that make up the current school context.

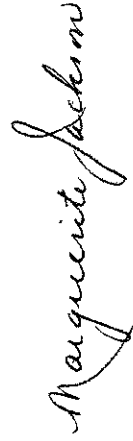
This book is a celebration of the quality of Ontario's public education system. As you read these stories, you will be inspired by the educators whose vision and dedication have made such a positive impact on student learning.

We have created this book not only to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of our schools, but also to provide a valuable resource for educators. These pages describe many strategies that have proven successful for enhancing student achievement.

The stories indicate that the data gathered from EQAO assessments have become a catalyst for meaningful conversations about student success. It is the commitment of EQAO to continue to reach out to educators and visit schools across the province so that we can hear your stories first-hand.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our young people.

Yours sincerely,



Marguerite Jackson
Chief Executive Officer

ELIZABETH CATHOLIC SCHOOL
Cambridge

**WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT
SCHOOL BOARD**

Principal at time of profile
John Baker
Year profiled/collected
2006-2007

Located in Cambridge, in Ontario's Waterloo region, St. Elizabeth Catholic School serves a culturally homogeneous student population of just under 500 students. The student population has remained stable throughout the school's 15-year history, though the total number of students enrolled has declined over the past several years. The community's parents are active as volunteers on school committees and in fundraising.

People now see EQAO as having validity and reliability.
John Baker, principal

The school employed a number of assessments to gauge its students' academic progress. In addition to EQAO assessments, CASI and CCAT, it administered BLAM, which it adopted from the Toronto Catholic District School Board. The EQAO assessments showed that 85% to 90% of the school's students achieved the provincial standard. EQAO's Item Information Reports revealed some challenges in higher-level thinking skills, especially with making inferences and connections. The data revealed no gender gap in this school.

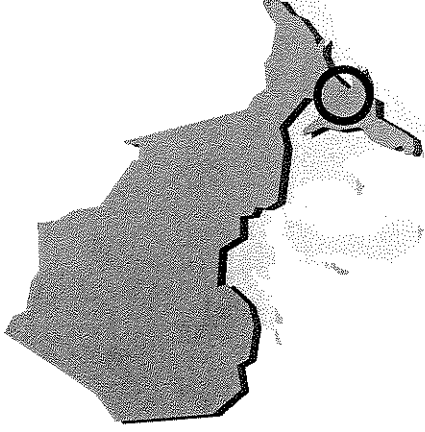
Principal John Baker and his teachers decided to focus on moving Level 2 students to Level 3 and Level 3 students to Level 4. The school employed a wealth of resources and strategies to move its students forward. A board-authored document, *Planning for Student Success: Grades 1-6*, served as the foundation for its initiatives with respect to both literacy and math.

All teaching staff at St. Elizabeth received training in the analysis and interpretation of data. Instructional strategies and techniques were developed based on students' strengths and challenges, which were identified at monthly divisional meetings. Differentiated instruction enabled students to benefit from the effective use of assessments.

The school implemented a balanced literacy program, which included daily reading aloud and shared, guided and independent reading at all grade levels. Graphic organizers were employed in all phases of the reading process. Word wall charts were posted throughout the school for word study and content development in other subject areas.

Several reading programs were introduced, including All-Star Reading for Grades 1-3, Remediation Plus, and Strong Start. A lunch-hour book club was begun. The focus on improving boys' literacy led to the use of car manuals, automotive magazines and sports literature for classroom reading. Purchasing magazine subscriptions for boys became a major thrust of the school's fundraising efforts.

St. Elizabeth's efforts to increase students' numeracy saw the purchase of the *Math Makes Sense* textbook series in 2004-2005. This offered more language-based instruction than previous resources and required students to reflect on and explain their thinking. "Manipulatives"—three-dimensional tools used to illustrate mathematical concepts—were used extensively in classroom instruction at all grade levels.



ST. NICHOLAS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
Waterloo

**WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT
SCHOOL BOARD**

Principal at time of profile
Rick Boisvert
Year profiled/collected
2006-2007

Since it opened in 2001, St. Nicholas Catholic School has seen its student population double to 600. The school serves a rapidly growing community in northwest Waterloo.

We see EQAO as a measure of student achievement that enables us to raise our standards and assists us in setting goals. It calls for excellence, and that's ultimately what we want for our students. We share the belief that every child is capable of success, and the staff works collectively to ensure that every child achieves his or her potential.

Rick Boisvert, principal

At the beginning of every academic year, the junior division staff of St. Nicholas reviews its EQAO results, in conjunction with formative classroom assessments, with a view to informing classroom instruction. In the second term, the staff uses data from CASL report cards and classroom formative assessments.

One successful junior division strategy is the creation of units to focus on higher-order thinking skills, as modelled in EQAO assessments and affirmed in current educational research. Staff embraces this as a stimulating challenge.

Beginning in junior kindergarten, staff uses balanced literacy folders, based on the board's BLAM policy, to track student strengths and challenges and to facilitate individualized reading instruction. The folders are reviewed regularly by school administrators in discussion with staff. St. Nicholas piloted Remediation Plus, a CODE-sponsored program. It requires that classroom teachers and the



special education teacher work collaboratively and has been extremely effective for skill reinforcement.

Early identification is the foundation of another success strategy. St. Nicholas runs a weekly, one-on-one, Strong Start program for struggling kindergarten and Grade 1 students. Trained parent-volunteers, directed by the special education teacher, work on sight words, sound-symbol correspondence, letter recognition and phonemic awareness. The program, which includes pre- and post-assessment, helps to distinguish between students who need skill reinforcement and those who need more intensive special education intervention.

All children at St. Nicholas learn the expectations for each level of achievement and receive child-friendly rubrics before they begin pertinent formative and summative assignments. Work samples for each level are posted in classrooms and sent home for parental review. By the end of Grade 3, students are able to articulate clearly what is required for each level.

St. Nicholas enjoys extensive parent involvement. Parents are engaged through school newsletters and student agendas and have implemented several school board Parent Involvement Committee best practices, to the great benefit of their children. The school council is active through the Enrichment, Faith and Communication committees and plans events such as career days.

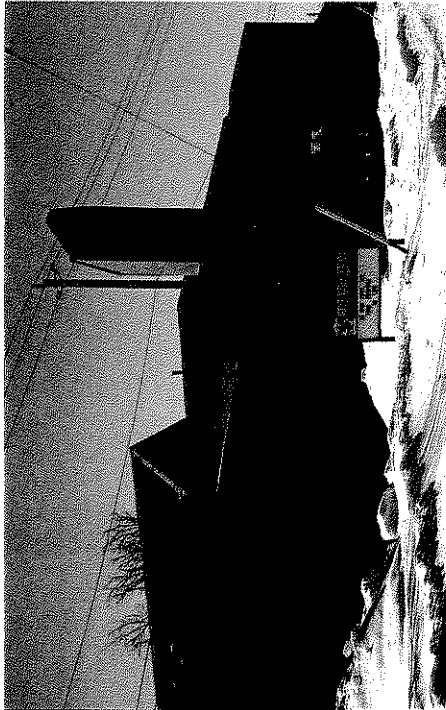
St. Nicholas Catholic School's Grade 3 reading results rose from 71% in 2002-2003 to 85% in 2006-2007, indicating the tremendous success of its strategies for student achievement.

RESURRECTION CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

Kitchener

WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Principal at time of profile
Jamie McKinnon
Year profiled/collected
2006-2007



For the past five years, the demographics at Resurrection Catholic Secondary School have remained stable, with an approximate yearly intake of 375 Grade 9 students. While half the students travel by city bus to the building, the school operates six buses for students who come from rural communities. Approximately 25% of the student population has IEPs.

Resurrection uses data to determine school strengths, challenges and trends. When EQAO data demonstrated that the OSSLT success rate for applied students was noticeably lower than that of academic students, the school conducted a survey that showed many of the applied students considered themselves non-readers. Subsequently, Resurrection implemented various strategies to develop skills so that students would have an improved self-image and thus meet with more success. One of the most popular of its many initiatives is Resurrection Reads. Each day for one week, during rotating periods, everyone in the school, from students to administrators to custodians, reads for twenty minutes. To promote the concept that reading is enjoyable and to show them that everyone is a reader, students are free to read whatever they wish, including baseball cards.

The library at Resurrection has assumed a leadership role in supporting and nurturing a lifelong love of reading and learning. This vibrant library is an inviting destination for students, and, as a result, more than 1000 visit it every

day. The teacher-librarian maintains a balance between resources that address curriculum needs and materials that are strictly intended for pleasure. The librarian has arranged class trips to local bookstores, where students compiled wish lists that influenced future book purchases. Another successful initiative has been the sale of all outdated library materials, which has served to increase the visibility of resources left in the library and to ease access to newer resources. These efforts have prompted the number of items in circulation to jump from 5000 in 2004-2005 to 9000 in the first semester of 2006-2007.

I'm a big believer in "if you build it, they will come." We are seeing positive results from the many supports we have in place to foster a culture that promotes the significance of literacy to the lives of students.

Jamie McKinnon, principal

Resurrection has an OSSLT success rate of 70% for previously eligible students. The school attributes this high pass rate to its practice of inviting students personally to after-school tutorial classes. As well, the school ensures that these students have the opportunity to access the board's online preparation class.