

NEWS release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

► **82% of first-time test-takers in Peel board pass literacy test**

Of grade 10 students in the Peel District School Board who took the provincial literacy test for the first time, 82 per cent passed, compared to 82 per cent provincially. Forty-eight per cent of previously eligible students who rewrote the test were successful.

“Although Peel students are maintaining the high rate of success seen over the past five years, we remain focused on helping students in grades 7 to 12 strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills,” says Tony Pontes, director of education. “It’s also important to look at students’ progress over their entire time in high school. By the end of grade 12, about 98 per cent of students in Peel schools pass the test or the literacy course that’s an alternative to the test. I’m proud of our students’ success rate.”

Highlights of Peel board results for first-time test-takers include the following:

- 10,118 students were eligible to write the test for the first time in March 2012. Of those, 9,594 or 95 per cent wrote the test—the other students were deferred or absent.
- 86 per cent of girls passed the test, compared to 78 per cent of boys. Provincially, 86 per cent of girls passed the test, compared to 78 per cent of boys.
- 63 per cent of English language learners who wrote the test passed, compared to 66 per cent provincially. This year, nine per cent of eligible students are identified as English language learners.
- 45 per cent of students with special education needs (excluding gifted) passed, compared to 52 per cent provincially. This year, 12 per cent of eligible students are identified with special education needs (excluding gifted).
- 91 per cent of students in academic English courses passed the test, compared to 47 per cent in applied English courses, and 12 per cent in locally developed English courses.

“We’ve seen a significant increase—16 per cent—in the success rate of our English language learners. Last year, 47 per cent who wrote the test passed. This year, our success rate is 63 per cent. We are committed to ensuring that our English language learners have the supports they need to be successful, including a strong focus on differentiated instruction. As a former English language learner, I know how important these supports are to student success,” notes Pontes.

Explains Shawn Moynihan, superintendent of curriculum and instruction support services, “What’s most important about these results is how we use them to help improve student learning. Through a continued focus on differentiated instruction and assessment for learning—all designed to help students strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills—teachers will continue to use proven strategies to boost student achievement.”

The OSSLT is a one-day test that focuses on key skills in reading and writing. It is based on the reading and writing skills expected in the Ontario curriculum across all subject areas up to the end of grade 9. “It’s important for parents and the community to understand that the literacy test is not a standardized test, and it’s not a test of basic literacy skills—the test is based on the Ontario curriculum,” explains Moynihan. “Unlike a standardized test, a student’s performance on the test is not compared to that of

other students. Rather, students pass or fail the test based on a standard set by EQAO, which designs and marks the test. The requirement to pass this test is clearly much higher than the normal pass mark in school.” The test includes reading selections, multiple choice and short answer questions, as well as a variety of types of writing tasks.

For a copy of the Peel board report or for school-by-school results, visit the Peel board website at www.peelschools.org and look for the icon "Grade 10 literacy test" on the home page, or go to the Education Quality & Accountability Office website at www.eqao.com.

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Note to media: For highlights of Peel board results, complete Peel board results for first-time eligible and previously eligible students, and school-by-school results, visit www.peelschools.org and click on the “Grade 10 Literacy Test” chiclet on the home page.