

# NEWS release

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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

## **▶ 85% of first-time test-takers in Peel board pass literacy test** ***First-time pass rate jumps 16% in five years***

Of grade 10 students in the Peel District School Board who took the provincial literacy test for the first time, 85 per cent passed, compared to 84 per cent provincially. Fifty-one per cent of previously eligible students who rewrote the test were successful.

"It's clear that we've seen significant improvement over the past five years," says Jim Grieve, director of education. "It's also important to look at students' progress over time. By the end of grade 12, more than 90 per cent of all students pass the test or the literacy course that's an alternative to the test—and so they're able to graduate."

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

- 9,707 students were eligible to write the test for the first time in March 2007. Of those, 9,222 or 95 per cent wrote the test—the other students were deferred or absent.
- 88 per cent of girls passed the test, compared to 81 per cent of boys. The pass rate for boys has increased three per cent in the past three years.
- 54 per cent of students in English as a second language programs passed the test, an increase of three per cent from last year and a six per cent increase in the past three years. Five per cent of eligible students are ESL learners. Forty per cent of students have a first language other than English.
- 49 per cent of special education students passed, compared to 53 per cent provincially. The pass rate is unchanged in the Peel board over the past three years. Eleven per cent of eligible students are identified with special needs.
- 94 per cent of students in academic courses passed the test, compared to 59 per cent in applied courses, and 17 per cent in locally developed courses.

"What's most important about these test results is how we use them to help improve student learning," says Chuck Waterman, superintendent of curriculum and instruction. "This year, we have been focusing on implementing transformational practices to help students in grades 7 to 12 strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills. First, we gathered proven strategies from our schools that were making the biggest difference in boosting student achievement. Next, these transformational practices were packaged in a way that all schools could easily implement."

Following the launch of the transformational practices in January, teams from schools with grades 7 to 12 participated in two days of training about how to use the strategies. Elementary and secondary schools are developing plans for how they are going to work together to implement the practices. "This is by far the largest training we have ever done involving teachers from elementary and secondary schools working together," Waterman says. "In addition to the training of school teams, we have allocated 3,000 supply teacher days for 7-12 schools, to support cross-panel, cross-curricular training

right at the school level. The Peel board has invested more than \$1.2 million in transformational practices this year, similar to the amount devoted last year to supporting the transformational practices for kindergarten to grade 6."

All schools have a plan to begin implementing two of the transformational practices:

- preparing for EQAO assessments
- consistent and planned administration of EQAO assessments

As a family of schools, the teams have also chosen one additional transformational practice on which to focus, based on the greatest area of need for students in their area. The other practices are:

- using data to make informed decisions
- explicit teaching and reinforcement of vocabulary
- literacy skills across the curriculum
- three-part lesson design to support mathematical thinking
- purposeful talk about mathematics
- using thinking tools

"It's important for parents and the public 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. 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," Waterman explains.

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. The test includes reading selections, multiple choice and short answer questions, as well as a variety of types of writing tasks. Students receive a combined literacy score and must pass the test to receive their high school diploma.

For a copy of the Peel board report or for school-by-school results, visit the Peel board website at [www.peelschools.org](http://www.peelschools.org) and look for the icon "grade 10 literacy test" on the home page, or go to the EQAO site at [www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com).

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**Media contact:** Chuck Waterman, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction  
905-890-1010 (or 1-800-668-1146) ext. 2343

**Reference:** Sylvia Link, Manager of Communications  
905-890-1010 (or 1-800-668-1146) ext. 2814, [sylvia.link@peelsb.com](mailto:sylvia.link@peelsb.com)