



## Literacy in TDSB Schools

The Toronto District School Board places the highest priority on the literacy development of students at all grade levels, from kindergarten to graduation. In addition to literacy initiatives at the elementary school level, a key focus for the Board is the promotion of adolescent literacy. As students progress through the middle and secondary school grades, the literacy demands of all subject areas become increasingly complex. All students entering work, college, apprenticeship and university need effective reading, writing, and oral language skills to achieve success. The Toronto District School Board has undertaken the following initiatives to promote the literacy development of all students:

### Teaching to High Standards: Establishing Standards, Targets and Exemplary Literacy Practices

This ongoing TDSB initiative involves the following components:

- Literacy standards for each grade
- Classroom teaching modeled on successful practices
- Professional development for teachers in assessment strategies and literacy teaching
- Data collection and analysis, providing information to help improve students' reading skills and to monitor students' achievement in reading

The following have established TDSB standards:

- *Standards of Practice for Literacy K-3*
- *Standards of Practice for Literacy, 4-6*
- *Standards of Practice for Literacy 7-8*
- *Standards of Practice for Cross-Curricular Literacy for Teachers of Grades 9-12*

Teachers and administrators receive ongoing professional development in the use of *the Standards of Practice for Literacy*. Schools are provided with specific guidelines for the delivery of exemplary literacy programs for all grades. The document for secondary schools offers administrators and teachers of all subjects detailed suggestions for program planning, strategies for instruction and assessment, and a wealth of cross-curricular strategies and templates that can be used for school-wide literacy improvement.

The **Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)** has been implemented Board-wide, Grades 1-3. This assessment tool provides diagnostic information on reading comprehension, fluency, accuracy, phrasing, expression, and attention to punctuation. Using the information collected during the assessment, the teacher identifies what the student needs to learn next and the specific skills that will be the focus of instruction. The DRA is primarily a resource that is intended to support the classroom teacher. However, it is also being used to collect data on a sample of students to monitor reading skills in Grades One, Two and Three across the Board.

Two additional literacy assessment tools for the primary grades are the **Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement™** for Kindergarten, and **LAMP (Literacy Assessment Manual - Primary)** for Kindergarten to Grade 3. Both are rich, classroom-based resources containing assessment tools that teachers can use to assess students' development and achievement in various aspects of literacy.

**CASI (Comprehension Attitude Strategies Interests) Reading Assessment for Grades 4-8** has been distributed to all TDSB schools. These grade-specific assessment packages include reading passages and other components such as oral retelling, reading conference, miscue analysis, oral and written comprehension questions—assessments that provide important information to enable teachers to improve the reading skills and strategies of all learners. To date, approximately 4500 TDSB teachers from Grades 4-8 have received training in the administration and interpretation of the CASI assessments; this training will be on-going in the summer of 2005-06 and into 2006-07. In addition, in-service sessions were introduced in 2004-05 for *CASI: Next Steps* and *CASI: The Struggling Reader*, which will continue to be offered in 2005-06 and 2006-07.

**Grade 9 Literacy Diagnostic Assessments: Mathematics, Science and Geography**

School Services/Program staff have developed Literacy Diagnostic Assessments for teachers of Mathematics, Science and Geography. Teachers use these early in the school year or semester to determine which students are experiencing difficulty with textbook language, and which students require additional support to develop the reading and writing skills essential for learning subject-area content and for success on the OSSLT.

**Grade 9 Diagnostic Assessment: English**

The English/Literacy department has developed a Literacy Diagnostic Assessment for students in Grade 9 English. The reading passages, questions and writing tasks of this assessment reflect the reading and writing skills of the Ontario Secondary School literacy test. TDSB student samples provided with the assessment enable teachers to judge their students' responses according to OSSLT standards. Administered early in the school year or semester, the assessment helps teachers identify early the students who require additional instructional support to achieve success on the OSSLT. As important, the assessment guides teachers as they plan their teaching of specific reading and writing skills and strategies for the success of all their students in the course.

**Grade 10 Diagnostic Assessments: Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Grade 10 (2L), Grade 10 Applied (2P) and Grade 10 Academic (2D)**

Development is underway of differentiated Literacy Diagnostic Assessments for the three levels of Grade 10 core English. These were piloted in some TDSB schools in 2005-06, and a more extensive pilot will be conducted during 2006-07 to gather sample student responses to reading and writing tasks to be incorporated in the assessments. The assessments will be key in helping teachers of Grade 10 identify the students who are experiencing difficulty with the reading and writing skills of each course, and will enable teachers to help students acquire the literacy skills they need to be successful in school and on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.

**Early Years Literacy Project (EYLP)**

EYLP creates a school-wide focus on literacy to improve reading and writing skills for all students in Kindergarten to Grade 3. The intent is that all students in the primary years will read and write at grade level. The seventy-eight schools project schools receive additional staff who provide leadership and support for early literacy instruction, and receives an allocation of Reading Recovery™ staff, who provide one-to-one intervention for at-risk readers in Grade 1. Administrators, literacy coordinators, and teachers in EYLP schools receive on-going professional development throughout the year, including the opportunity to pursue Additional Qualifications courses in Reading. Partnerships with universities have been established in the areas of professional development, strategic planning, and research. The success of EYLP is monitored through the on-going collection of assessment data; all EYLP schools assess students with the Developmental Reading Assessment in the fall and in the spring. Training to administer these assessments is provided annually.

**Reading Recovery™**

Reading Recovery™ is a one-to-one intervention program for students in Grade 1 who are at-risk readers and writers. Teachers participate in intensive training in their first year of teaching, and are continuously trained throughout the time they are teaching Reading Recovery™. A trained teacher will teach from 8 to 12 students per year in a half-time morning assignment. Teachers work one on one with students in 30-minute lessons for a maximum of twenty weeks. Students selected for Reading Recovery™ have been assessed and are the lowest achievers in reading and writing in the classroom. The history of the program shows a 60-80% success rate for students returning to the regular classroom in grades two and three and working at grade level. The effectiveness of this program is well documented internationally, and the success of the program is highly valued and celebrated by staff, parents, and students.

**Middle Years Adolescent Literacy Project (MYALP)**

MYALP provides intensive, cross-curricular literacy support for students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. Launched in the fall of 2000, MYALP targets 19 high-needs schools, supporting programming and instructional practices that improve literacy. Participating schools receive additional staffing with in-depth professional development for teachers (including Additional Qualifications in Adolescent Literacy), enabling them to provide intensive intervention for struggling students. The effectiveness of the program is monitored through the on-going assessment of students and collection of assessment data. All students' reading is assessed using CASI in the fall; results are interpreted and instruction is adjusted to meet students' needs. Students are then reassessed in the spring. Students in the Middle Years Adolescent Literacy Project benefit from the commitment of all their teachers to teaching literacy skills in all school subjects.

**Later Literacy™**

The Later Literacy™ training program provides short-term intervention for students in Grades 6 – 10 who need to acquire the literacy skills to complement comprehensive classroom literacy program for their academic success. In Later Literacy™ the teacher, using a problem-solving approach to literacy, teaches individuals or small groups of students daily for forty-minute periods for ten weeks, with the specific goal of improving students' independent reading and writing skills. The Later Literacy™ Project has operated successfully in selected schools since 1995. Over the past six years, the invitation to be receive training in Later Literacy™ has been extended to all schools with Grades 7 –12 throughout the TDSB. During that time, more than 300 classroom teachers have received training, including all Adolescent Literacy Teachers in the Middle Years Adolescent Literacy Project. In addition to their work with students, teachers trained in Later Literacy™ are an invaluable resource to their colleagues, especially as schools work to implement supports for higher achievement for struggling readers and writers, and to prepare students for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.

**Reading Clinics**

Reading Clinics provide intensive intervention for students in Grades 2-5 who are experiencing significant difficulty with reading and writing. Students who are referred to Reading Clinic are thoroughly assessed. Students who are placed in Reading Clinic receive individualized or small-group instruction for approximately 40 – 60 minutes daily to accelerate their reading and writing skills. Instruction is focussed on explicit learning strategies aimed at developing proficiency in the following core areas: sight vocabulary acquisition, word analysis skills for identifying unfamiliar words, reading comprehension of both narrative and expository texts, spelling, written composition, and editing strategies. There are currently two Reading Clinicians who do the assessments, programming, and staff development, and 17 Reading Clinic teachers who work with approximately 200 students in 37 sites that include children from approximately 60 home schools.

**Literacy Enrichment Academic Program (LEAP)**

LEAP is an intensive upgrading program for students who have recently arrived in Ontario schools with limited prior schooling. Some have not had the opportunity to attend school at all before arriving in Canada. As a result, these students are significantly behind their peers in literacy and numeracy, and would not achieve level 1 if assessed according to grade level expectations. LEAP helps students to make significant gains (equivalent to at least two grade levels in one academic year) in second language development, literacy and numeracy skills, and academic skills and knowledge, so that they can eventually be successfully integrated into the mainstream program. Since the number of students requiring LEAP is relatively small in individual schools, the program is offered as “congregated” programs in designated schools serving local clusters of schools. LEAP is provided for newcomers beginning in Grade 6

**First Steps™**

*First Steps™* is a literacy framework that helps teachers to deliver effective, balanced programs in reading, writing, spelling, and oral language. Intensive staff development ensures that teachers link assessment with instruction, and provides a rich repertoire of strategies to build the literacy skills of all students, including French Immersion students, ESL/ELD students, and those with special needs. Over the past six years, the TDSB has sponsored the training of approximately 340 classroom teachers as *First Steps™* Trained Tutors, who provide training and support to teachers in their own schools as well as additional schools in their family, in both the English and French Immersion programs.

It has been a major goal of TDSB to extend and consolidate the implementation of *First Steps™* Writing across the district. *First Steps™* Writing provides teachers with an effective framework for linking assessment data with instructional approaches to teaching writing process and writing forms, enabling students to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills to improve their writing and communicate their ideas clearly and correctly.

Recognizing the importance of Oral Language as a foundation for all literacy success, TDSB continues its introduction of *First Steps™* Oral Language to classroom teachers in 2005-06 and will continue to build teacher capacity in Oral Language in the coming years.

**Early Reading Intervention**

The Early Reading Intervention program, first piloted by schools in NorthWest 5 in 2004-05, was implemented in 72 TDSB schools during the 2005-06 school year. The program trains Educational Assistants to provide one-to-one reading instruction to Grade 1 students for a period of thirty minutes per day over a 9-week period. This program benefited 102 Grade 1 students, significantly improving their reading levels. The program will continue next year, and will be extended into interested schools.

**Continuing implementation of TDSB Cross-curricular Literacy Resources and *Think Literacy***

School Services/Program staff have been providing professional development in cross-curricular literacy since the year 2000, helping teachers understand the literacy demands of their subjects and acquire teaching strategies to improve students' literacy achievement. The English Literacy Department provides on-going leadership in professional development and resources to a variety of important system partners; teachers of all content areas use TDSB cross-curricular literacy documents (*Cross-curricular Literacy: Key Strategies for Improving Secondary Students' Reading and Writing Skills* and *Cross-curricular Literacy: Key Strategies for Improving Middle School Students' Reading and Writing Skills*) to help students learn and master the reading and writing skills that they need to be successful in all of their school subjects. These TDSB-created documents inspired the Ministry of Education in 2003 to create *Think Literacy*, a cross-curricular literacy resource for all Ontario schools, along with 43 related subject-specific *Think Literacy* resources. Following the introduction of the first *Think Literacy* document in spring 2004 to over 800 TDSB teachers and administrators, the school years 2004/5 and 2005/6 saw the introduction of the Ministry's *Think Literacy* subject-specific literacy documents to 740 teachers of Grades 7 to 12 in all subject areas. This emphasis on cross-curricular literacy has played an important role in improving Grade 7-12 students' literacy competence in all their subjects.

**Support for the preparation for and administration of the OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test)**

The English/Literacy department continues to deliver in-service sessions to school staffs, administrators and teachers of all subjects to help them prepare their students to be successful on the OSSLT. These sessions include strategies to help students analyze and follow instructions and manage their time, and strategies and approaches to help students improve the reading and writing skills assessed by the OSSLT. Support is also being provided to families of schools and literacy committees to help schools establish a whole-school approach to literacy teaching and a culture of literacy.

**Continuing Implementation of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC)**

Professional development continues to be provided to teachers of the OSSLC (semestered and full-year) to ensure that they have the strategies and resources they need to deliver the course effectively and foster student success. Support includes reading and writing exemplars (samples of student work at various levels of achievement) to help teachers identify and apply a fair and consistent pass/fail standard for this high-stakes course. Information related to criteria for enrolment, timetabling suggestions, and available TDSB support has been provided to Superintendents of Education and to administrators in all four quadrants.

**Continuing Implementation of the Grade 9 and 10 Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Courses (ENG 1L and ENG 2L)**

On-going professional development opportunities are provided to teachers of these courses (introduced in 2004-2005) to ensure that they have the teaching strategies and resources to deliver these courses effectively and to improve the literacy achievement, and school success, of these at-risk students. TDSB is committed to providing rich and appropriate teaching resources, both teacher-created and from publishers to supplement the provincial course profile, and plans to work in partnership with Special Education to help better meet the instructional needs of students in these courses.

**A Novel Idea: Novel List Database: Grades 7-8 (CD Rom and TDSB Web site)**

To support students' development as proficient, independent readers, TDSB has prepared a database of recommended novels for use in Grades 7 and 8. The database includes annotations and sample study guides. Schools have received copies of the database on CD-ROM. The database is also posted on the TDSB Web site.

**Grades 7 and 8 Remedial Literacy Support Materials**

Schools continue to use the TDSB *Grades 7 and 8 Remedial Literacy Support Materials* in their after-school remedial literacy programs. However, teachers find these materials helpful in a variety of contexts, such as withdrawal remedial support, summer school programs, and regular classroom programs. The document consists of modules that provide students with opportunities to learn about and practise essential reading, writing, and oral language skills and strategies, and is in the process of being enhanced with the addition of high-interest, classroom-ready materials. This document is distributed to schools through the Continuing Education Department.

**Grades 9 and 10 Remedial Literacy Materials**

Schools continue to use *Support Document for Grades 9 and 10 Remedial Literacy: Non-Credit Programs* in their after-school remedial literacy programs to support at-risk students and those who require additional work to complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test successfully. These resources include lessons to help

students develop key reading skills. Lessons also address the writing forms assessed in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. This document is distributed to schools through the Continuing Education Department.

### **Grade 10 OSSLT Preparation Course**

Schools offer this 10-hour remedial test-preparation mini-course after school in February to prepare at-risk students for the successful completion of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. Using the *Support Document for OSSLT Test-Taking Skills: Non-Credit Program (Grade 10)*, teachers teach students important test-taking skills (e.g., answering different kinds of questions) and other critical literacy skills they need to meet the requirements of the test. This document is distributed to schools through the Continuing Education Department.

### **Access Success! Boys and Literacy Achievement, Grades 6-10**

This TDSB initiative addresses the gaps in motivation and performance between male and female students in literacy. Together with the new Ministry document *Me Read? No Way! A Practical Guide to Improving Boys' Literacy Skills*, this TDSB document includes recommended strategies and resources for teachers, providing support to schools to ensure high literacy achievement for all students. Administrators and teachers are receiving on-going professional development on *Access Success!* The document is a key resource for the twenty schools who received Ministry of Education funding in 2006 to conduct teacher inquiry projects into the issues of boys' literacy achievement.

### **Promotion, Transfer, and Retention: Grade 8 to Grade 9**

The TDSB has developed a comprehensive package of materials to help schools with issues related to promotion, transfer, and retention of students from Grade 8 to Grade 9. The materials suggest various levels of support, as well as intervention strategies, that schools can implement to ease the transition between elementary and secondary schools. They also help elementary schools to identify students leaving Grade 8 who require literacy intervention in Grade 9 in order to be successful. Sustained partnerships between Families of Schools Transitions teams and Instructional leaders help teachers of both Grades 7 & 8 and Grades 9 & 10 understand the literacy needs and challenges of students at each grade, enabling students to choose secondary courses and levels most appropriate for their continuing success in school.

TDSB published and launched **Media Studies K-12** in the fall of 2005. This important resource gives all teachers, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, knowledge, skills and practical and interesting approaches to teaching media literacy skills to all students. The document provides support for students as they develop their skills in critical literacy, and provides examples of teaching strategies for many media forms, such as textbooks, educational video, Web sites, and graphics. The resource is an important support for elementary teachers as they implement in their teaching a new strand, Media Literacy, which has been added to the revised *Ontario Curriculum for Language, 1-8* for implementation in 2006-07.

### **Urban Voices/L'echo de la ville 2006**

The TDSB is committed to providing opportunities and venues for students to demonstrate success and achievement in literacy. *Urban Voices/L'echo de la ville* is an annual publication (beginning in the year 2000) of exemplary poetry and illustrations, in English and in French, by elementary and secondary students from across the TDSB. Over 2000 entries are submitted annually, and poetry is judged at the school, quadrant, and board levels. In June, TDSB published its seventh volume of *Urban Voices/L'echo de la ville*, and celebrated its launch at a gala evening on June 5 for students, parents and educators. The 2006 anthology and previous editions are posted on the TDSB Web site.

### **Support for Beginning Teachers**

TDSB provides extensive support to teachers across TDSB in their first and second years of teaching. This support includes the implementation of strong, well-developed literacy and numeracy programs. This initiative encompasses all families of schools across the board. An important aspect of the Beginning Teachers initiative is the pairing of new teachers with experienced teachers who have effective interpersonal and teaching skills, who act as mentors for beginning teachers. Professional development is provided with the knowledge that strong, well-developed literacy and numeracy programs lay the foundation for academic achievement in all other areas of curriculum. Literacy and numeracy are identified as vital components of the mentoring relationships and the in-service provided.

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