

Ward 15, Toronto- Danforth

Trustee Jennifer Story

Ward Forum - EQAO

Wednesday November 29, 2017 from 6:30- 8:30pm

Dundas Public School

Ward Forum on EQAO

EQAO and its impact in the classroom: what the research with teachers tells us

- this presentation is not about board's position or how students can achieve
- it is a discussion on how data impacts EQAO and the equity lens

Guest Speaker Arlo Kempf, Associate Program Director, MT Program, OISE

Introduction

- study of experiences that teachers have had with EQAO
- has looked at teachers work over the past 10 years

The teachers and testing project looked at:

6 case studies in different schools; over 100 teachers interviewed in Toronto and LA

- EQAO established 1996
- standardized testing in grades 3, 6, 9

Standardized Tests and improved education outcomes; 3 common arguments in favour:

1. offers good and objective measure of student learning
2. provides a level playing field in terms of equity
3. provides accountability to public

US and Canada have unique contexts

- US uses more standardized tests; at the high end of the spectrum, Canada is in the middle
- equity within a country affects the results

- Ontario teachers spend 10% of their yearly time on EQAO
- \$40- 60 per student annually

- US takes up 10- 30% of teachers time

Equity concerns

- pressure with special education
- Equity issues
- causes stress and anxiety in students
- ELL, IEP, additional supports and needs affected
- some teachers avoid teaching at grade 3 and 6 level
- make tests more culturally inclusive, each year this improves

- context is not culturally inclusive; no understanding and knowledge of culturally specific activities, references, and settings

Income gap and valuing/devaluing schools (real estate agents)

- drives real estate prices
- parents perceptions –cycle of quasi privatization
- privileged positions
- gaps in fundraising by location

- test results allow parents to understand school programs strengths and weaknesses

Alternatives to Standardized testing

- use existing measures of assessments
- random sampling as suggested by many teacher associations/organizations
- support for teacher observation, reflection and performance based assessment of student learning
- recognizing the research in psychology and psychiatry regarding well- being of (stress caused on younger students gr. 3)

Dissenting Voices and Alternatives

Current Ontario Context

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Administration/Schools – rethinking
- Jurisdictions

Comments and Questions

Question/Comment: Negative views on EQAO: it is a Canadian version of American standardized tests; it is tied to real estate; how are we going to have a standard for children with special needs?

Answer: Many are not sure that EQAO has served its purpose. Its significance has changed over the years. It is a criteria referenced assessment. It may not be an accurate holistic view.

Q: What kind of structures can we put in place to meet the goal of student success?

A: There are diagnostics that are useful. We learn accurate things from the test: rich performance tasks, think of how everyone is engaging, there are co- creative and collaborative initiatives that can help.

Q: How can we set a standard for reading across Canada? The test is a snapshot in time. It has no meaning.

A: EQAO is revised every year to be more inclusive; need to find and use the info that EQAO gives us.

Question/Comment: We have a wealth of data to see where gaps exist in TDSB:

- diagnostic reading assessment
- EQAO in grade 3, 6, grade 9 math
- literacy test in grade 10 has to be passed or can't graduate
- we have a snapshot of time in EQAO
- report cards

- a lot of data is available for student assessment
- EQAO has data that shows what happens to the same cohort of students throughout the grades
- Where do we intervene? At what level? How do we have students succeed at each level?
- EQAO test provides a source of where to intervene; if intervention and instruction happens it can change the outcome of student success; we have to look at where to intervene and change instructional practice

A: We also have to consider what are costs of class time, of well-being? Literacy tests are also used as assessment. What do they all measure? Can we find these things out through another means? Some principals find that it EQAO is important in their schools.

Q: Could the focus on the test deprioritize other subjects? Is there a negative effect on other subjects?

A: Testing pressures are high for teachers. We have to think about where the data from the test is used really well for student success.

Q: Is there a way to reform the system? Is there the possibility to reform?

A: Randomize piece; take a select number of students to get tested; do not get results back. With the randomized testing we get different slices of data and a provincial viewpoint. There are pros and cons, it is a popular suggestion. It is unlikely that there will be reform soon. Reform is coming, EQAO has grown into something it never started as. A shift needs to capture the intentions of what it set out to be.

Q: How often does the test change? If the questions on the test keep changing how do we get data on historical results? False statistics since it changes often.

A: The test changes every year. It is not perfect. Moving target question: how does assessment happen? There is quality control at EQAO on how it is marked. 20 years of revision, each year there are improvements; data casts questions of inclusiveness of the test at a certain time. The test creates a standard across the province.

Q: Why does the test have to be so different from what they do in the classroom throughout the year? Why can't the info be included in the report card? Kids know it is different. We need to advocate for the students.

A: What problem does EQAO solve? It causes wide spread anxiety which needs to be addressed.

Q: The diagnostic reading assessment was different between schools. Administration was not implementing it the same way in different schools. What other assessments can be used?

A: Teachers can use reading assessment as one tool to see if students are reading at level; the focus is on grade 1. Superintendents are in school for 3.5 weeks to see what level students are at. They look at interventions to support teachers, diversity, guided reading, moving students through. They look at level students are at, take info from one grade to the next. Ask your school what assessments are being used.

Q: What is the data around time spent on testing? Is there data around preparation and results of test?

A: Not sure if the data exists. Hopefully more studies are done around the correlation.

Comment: It is a test that you can get better at with prep.

A: The skill of how to answer a multiple choice question is taught early. There is not supposed to be any prep for EQAO.

Comment: The issue of good EQAO scores signaling a good neighbourhood.

A: This has been an issue in the past 10 years.

Q: Parental engagement differs by community. How does that impact their results?

A: Different parent groups have different expectations. Cultural specific questions. Greater anxiety based on parental engagement. Marks go up if the test counts, grades will go up.

Q: ELL concern; is there consideration for each local admin?

A: For students in grade 9 there are specific courses considering language acquisition. Look at when they reach a specific level. There are deferrals. If students need scribing, they can have it in place.

Q: What if data shows nothing has changed?

A: Administrators use the data towards school improvement. Think about how to unpack the challenges. The province is doing a review. Encourage communities to send their views and opinions. There is a public consultation happening in Ontario. Consultation is done online. One of the conversations is the accountability of voice not only on spending. Ontario Assessment Consultation; Public Consultation is on the EQAO site.

Q: Are they consulting other countries?

A: Looking at Finland and Singapore. In the past have looked at standardization in US.

Q: As they get older do the kids fail the test intentionally; know it does not go towards their mark?

A: Grade 9 math assessment has to do with what is already taught; there is a lot of matching with what is taught. Grade 10 literacy is a requirement; it needs to be completed. Students know that it needs to be done. Results are included in their math mark. There is some incentive to take it more seriously. It is an expectation across high schools.

## Reports

- French as a Second Language Advisory Committee updates will be in the newsletter.

- Cori will send PIAC update via e-mail. There is an April PIAC event and more info will be sent out.

- School Resource Officers: Decision made not based on majority response; chose as a board made on decision of students opinions of negative impact of officer participation in their schools. Does not mean that there is no relationship to be had with police in our schools. Police can be connected and engaged in our schools.

- Enhancing Equity Task Force Report: It is an interim report. The task force is an advisory group that is doing an analysis on equity in the board. The board receives recommendations from staff and trustees and they deliberate on advice. Inclusion is not an all or nothing scenario, rather maintain choice in number of areas including gifted. There will be more opportunity for parent input. The Task Force report will be submitted to Director of Education to interpret and give advice, will tap staff (superintendents, senior and central staff and research department) for best approach.