

St. Theresa of Lisieux Catholic High School

YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Student population: 1700; Grades: 9–12; Principal: Peter Bahen

St. Theresa of Lisieux Catholic High School in Richmond Hill opened in 2002 and serves 1700 students from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds. About 35% of the students are bused. St. Theresa offers academic, applied and locally developed semestered courses in Grades 9 through 12 and has an advanced placement program. Twenty-nine percent of the school's students have been formally identified as having special education needs.

St. Theresa's teachers use EQAO and other data effectively.

Proper placement, explicit teaching, individual help, plentiful resources and a focus on the curriculum ensure student success. Communication and collaboration are key strategies as are common language and assessments. As a result of these strategies, 75% of Grade 9 students in applied and academic math state that they feel well-prepared and understand the mathematics they are taught.

Acting principal Peter Bahen and his staff make tremendous use of EQAO data and resources. In order to ensure the successful teaching of the curriculum, Frank Dalla Corte, former department head of mathematics and now vice-principal, leads his team in examining Grade 9 EQAO data in conjunction with data from the primary and junior assessments on a student-by-student basis.

Through the extensive analysis of data, followed by discussion, reflection and review, the staff continues to refine the math program delivery in partnership with local elementary schools. The mathematics department has established good relationships

with the feeder schools, sharing EQAO results and providing Grade 8 teachers with materials and in-service training.

EQAO resources play a prominent role in the mathematics department's planning. Department members mine the EQAO Web site for resources. They read success stories, watch EQAO webcasts and use sample EQAO tests. Staff members have scored for EQAO and have worked on the agency's sensitivity committees.



George Azar; Danielle Campacci; Peter Bahen, principal; Frank Dalla Corte, vice-principal; Pat Anecchiarico

The staff also looks at the EQAO results for each test question to gauge how well the curriculum is being delivered. This item-by-item analysis is used to adjust the language or approach for specific lessons. The teachers focus on the curriculum but are equally concerned with engaging their students in learning through the use of technology such as Smart Boards and Senteo response systems ("clickers"). Such technology also gives teachers and students specific data on student learning.

The success of St. Theresa's students is the result of a team effort. Everyone takes ownership in delivering the curriculum. The teachers' practices are data-driven. Teachers set the expectations, use common language and assessment tools and engage in continuous collaboration and dialogue.

"We very much believe in common assessment. Our Grade 9 teachers make sure that the students are writing the same tests and the same quizzes."

—Frank Dalla Corte, vice-principal

"We look at data as a benchmark. We look at how we deliver the curriculum, how our students are achieving, whether they are meeting with success, whether there is something we need to review and take a different approach on."

—Frank Dalla Corte



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GRADE 9 STUDENT POPULATION

	ACADEMIC	APPLIED
Female	47%	45%
Male	53%	55%
English language learners	0%	0%
Special education needs	3%	39%
Speaks primarily a language other than English at home	8%	6%

To ensure continuity and consistency, teachers have developed mathematics course kits that support the curriculum. The kits act as workbooks and course study guides. Each teacher takes responsibility for one strand and provides quizzes, worksheets and tests gathered from EQAO, the Ministry (e.g., the Targeted Implementation and Planning Supports [TIPS]) and commercial sources. Imbedded in every unit are EQAO-type multiple-choice and open-response questions. Using the course kit saves class time, as all materials are on hand.

A key part of ensuring student credit accumulation is proper placement. New Grade 9s visit St. Theresa in August and write a diagnostic mathematics test. During the first week of September, there is a review of Grade 8 work followed by another assessment. Coupled with student history and data from the feeder schools, these marks give an excellent indication of appropriate placement for the students.

Teachers schedule regular times for extra help in mathematics, with additional availability before tests. Senior students offer help after school as part of their community service. There is a

mathematics teacher who works one-on-one with students with special education needs, who are withdrawn on a staggered timetable to ensure they do not miss the same class repeatedly.

Communication with parents is frequent through progress reports, course kits and information letters that students must have signed and returned. Parents can access student marks online. A package based on the curriculum is sent home 14 days before the EQAO math assessment. It includes 80 sample questions for students to complete as preparation for the assessment and the final exam.

Committed to delivering the best programs possible, the educators at St. Theresa are positive, interested in learning new techniques, able to use technology effectively and eager to share their ideas.

St. Theresa's educators use specific SMART goals based on the curriculum and have enduring expectations for their students. They teach, model and discuss life skills such as organization, time management and decision making. They help the students make connections to the real world.

“What it comes down to is this: you have to care. I see students coming into high school that have not had success in mathematics and have a block. I want to get by that. I tell them that this is a fresh start. I can give you many strategies, but if we cannot make a connection with a child, we are not going to be successful. I think we’re successful when students come to math class happy and want to be there.”

—Frank Dalla Corte