

DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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THE IMPACT OF DATA DRIVEN LITERACY TEST PREPARATION ON STUDENT OSSLT SUCCESS RATES

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- What is the impact of improved student literacy preparation initiatives on student OSSLT test results and school OSSLT test results?
- How can we establish an easy method of extracting OSSLT test result data and correlate these results with G.L. Roberts C.V.I. improved student literacy preparation initiatives?
- How can we build capacity in terms of MISA application and Literacy Preparation Initiatives within G.L. Roberts C.V.I. staff and throughout Durham Board schools?

BACKGROUND

We came to study this issue as G.L. Roberts C.V.I. has traditionally had low success rates on the OSSLT. We knew that while G.L. Roberts has a high identified and at-risk population (approximately 2/3 of student population), previous school-wide initiatives had shown gradual and continual improvement in student OSSLT success rates.

Buoyed by this success, we sought to improve through comparing test scores of DDSB schools, identifying and adapting strategies used in schools with high success rates. We also wanted to identify the impact of our own literacy preparation activities on student success rates, using the data to review and revise our literacy preparation initiatives. These initiatives included:

1. Silent Reading Breaks
2. Incorporating the OSSLT model within assessment practices and lessons
3. Literacy Practice Test (November)
4. Literacy Practice Test score analysis
5. Meeting with each student participant to discuss individual strengths and needs to be successful on the OSSLT
6. "You've Been Booked" Campaign – students caught reading are given a ticket for draws for prizes
7. Literacy Remediation Sessions – 2 sessions of 2.5 hours in length for each student who did not pass the Literacy Practice Test. Reviewed reading and writing strategies and test attack skills
8. Literacy Rewrite Sessions – 2 sessions of 2.5 hours in length to review reading and writing strategies and test attack skills
9. Literacy ESL Student Sessions – 2 sessions of 2.5 hours in length to review reading and writing strategies and test attack skills specific to an ESL students' needs
10. Offering a Marzano Reading Group for teachers to develop and apply instructional strategies
11. Literacy Spring Training – fun activities to further develop reading, writing, and test attack strategies
12. Literacy Packages in Grade 10 Classes – examples of OSSLT format questions for students who need extra practice with literacy and test attack skills
13. Phone Script for Publicity Campaign – parent's of students writing the OSSLT will be telephoned to remind them of the importance of encouraging their son and/or daughter to participate in literacy preparation initiatives and the OSSLT
14. Poster Campaign – Posters in school to continue to promote the awareness of the OSSLT
15. Pamphlet – to inform parents and students of the OSSLT
16. Visits to Grade 10 classes – to inform students of the OSSLT format and expectations of students on the day of the test
17. Literacy Breakfast and Snacks – students will be encouraged to come for a complimentary breakfast starting at 8:00 a.m. the day of the test. Staff presence is essential to encourage students. Juice/water and cookies will be available for students during the test



Our research project was carried out over two years using the following methods:

1. Comparing Successful DDSB School Initiatives: We examined DDSB schools with improving OSSLT success rates and met with staff to identify OSSLT preparation initiatives used in those schools. We then reviewed our existing OSSLT preparation initiatives and compared them to other initiatives within the DDSB to identify possible additional initiatives to apply at G.L. Roberts C.V.I. to further improve our OSSLT student success rates. (June 2006, 2007)
2. Detailed School OSSLT Results Analysis: Our MISA project team performed detailed analysis of school v. board results from OSSLT school data to identify strengths, areas of potential improvement and trends. This was shared with our Literacy Committee then to the staff as a whole (June 2006, 2007)
3. Student Survey/Correlation of Preparation Activities with OSSLT Results: Our MISA project team had students writing the OSSLT complete a survey to identify the OSSLT preparation initiatives that they participated in or were aware of and correlated this data with OSSLT results (as released in June 2006). Data was shared with the Literacy committee and staff at the end of June 2006. Note: In the second year we eliminated the need for the survey by tracking student attendance in preparation activities and results on pre-test (ongoing through 2006-7 year) and correlated this data with OSSLT results (June 2007).
4. Review of Literacy test preparation initiatives offered: Our Literacy Committee reviewed the preparation initiatives offered for the 2007 OSSLT based on results from 2006 analysis. (Sept 2006) Note: Initial data was shared in June 2007 by the Principal and MISA team with key Literacy Committee members for celebration purposes. Reporting of detailed data to staff was moved to September for 2007-8 to be followed by the review of preparation initiatives by the Literacy Committee with input from the MISA team.
5. Marzano Department Head Instructional Strategies Retreat: All department heads were involved in a retreat which involved an off-site afternoon luncheon and workshop to examine Marzano's "School Leadership That Works". The purpose was to promote cross-curricular implementation of instructional strategies and promote data informed leadership and decision making within departments. Participation in the activities at the workshop were used to assess effectiveness (August 2006, August 2007).
6. Implementation of Revised OSSLT Preparation Initiatives: The Literacy Committee implemented revised initiatives (Sept 2006 – March 2007) Note: Based on our success with our process in the 2006-7 school year, this process will continue based on review of 2007 OSSLT data in the 2007-8 school year and ongoing.
7. Report to MISA: MISA team developed report to MISA, to assist other schools within the DDSB and MISA (July 2007)

RESULTS & FINDINGS:

Summary of Results:

1. Comparing Successful DDSB School Initiatives: We initially had literacy test preparation activities in place, but identified the Literacy Carnival (Spring Training) and Literacy Breakfast initiatives used at successful schools as positive additions to our existing initiatives. Our data (June 2006) indicated that these were well received by the students and that they did correlate positively to OSSLT success.
2. Detailed School OSSLT Results Analysis: Our detailed analysis of school v. board results from OSSLT school data identified strengths, areas of potential improvement and trends well beyond the reported success rate. Of interest was comparing schools demographics and success rates of academic, applied, essential and special education, ESL and genders. In the first year (2006) we identified a need to focus on special education support and this reaped major benefits in our essential and special education data (2007). We identified that our students did relatively well compared to board data for academic, applied and essential but that the demographic ratios were different school to school making success rate data hard to compare. We will continue to track trends in the success rates of the levels. We also identified a major discrepancy in success rates for males v. females and will continue to monitor this as we try to focus on improving male scores. The data also clearly indicated the need to use deferrals where appropriate for a few of our students and this was done for 2007. We will monitor these students in their second year of eligibility to see if they are successful with an additional year of preparation. We identified a gradual and significant improvement in results over the past five years, from 58% to 72% with a slight dip to 69% in 2007 consistent with board trends. These results were shared with our Literacy Committee then to the staff as a whole (June 2006, 2007) and used to review and revise OSSLT preparation initiatives.

RESULTS & FINDINGS (CONT'D):

3. Student Survey and Data Analysis from OSSLT: The student survey data (2006) indicated correlation of student participation in and perceptions of effectiveness of the literacy preparation initiatives to student OSSLT success (detailed analysis is available). In the second year (2007) attendance data for participation was used in place of the survey also confirmed the correlation (also available). Our MISA team also identified trends within the OSSLT school reports and individual student reports. This information was shared with the school staff for celebration and review of preparation activities for the following year. This has occurred and will continue into the school year 2007-8 and ongoing.
4. Review of Literacy Test Preparation Initiatives Offered: Our MISA Team analyzed the data from our survey (2006) and attendance / participation data v. OSSLT success (2007) and identified that all initiatives including the new Spring Training (Carnival) and Literacy Breakfast had a positive perception from the students and correlated to success on the OSSLT (2006,2007). As the result, we maintained all initiatives for 2006-2007 and into 2007-2008. We will also review current initiatives through our Literacy Committee to address identified needs in 2007-2008 based upon the June 2007 data. This data again indicated that all preparation initiatives were successful at promoting student OSSLT success. At this time (June 2007) staff have indicated a desire to continue existing initiatives and the MISA team has some suggestions for improvement based on our data. Note: Initial data was shared in June 2007 by the Principal and MISA team with key Literacy Committee members for celebration purposes. Reporting of detailed data to staff was moved to September for 2007-8 to be followed by the review of preparation initiatives by the Literacy Committee with input from the MISA team.
5. Marzano Department Head Instructional Strategies Retreat: This was highly successful with all department heads actively participating in our August 2006 retreat discussions based upon the first two chapters of Marzano's "School Leadership That Works". Department Heads were supportive of their role as leaders in instruction and assessment using data informed leadership and as mentors to staff and school-based release time was offered to support this. A second retreat is planned following the same model for August 2007 with all department heads reading the remaining chapters in preparation. The principal developed support materials to focus and promote discussion.
6. Implementation of Revised OSSLT Preparation Initiatives: The Literacy Committee implemented revised initiatives (Sept 2006 – March 2007). Changes this year included a revised pre-test based on the 2006 test released by EQAO. MISA team members contacted EQAO to clarify marking to closely approximate this in order to get an accurate pre-test assessment. Our Literacy Pretest (Nov 2006) was found to be a good predictor of OSSLT success. The team reviewed results with individual students and used pre-test data to revise and focus the literacy preparation sessions and spring break carnival activities. Revised preparation activities were found to be successful. Many students who were unsuccessful on our pretest or who missed the pretest but participated in the preparation activities showed high success rates on the OSSLT. This was not the case for those not attending the sessions. While our Silent Reading program is part of the culture of the school, based on the reading group exploring Marzano's "Background Knowledge" a team from the Literacy Committee is currently reviewing our Silent Reading program to identify ways to encourage follow-up activities to improve effectiveness. Note: Based on our success with our process in the 2006-7 school year, this process will continue based on review of 2007 OSSLT data in the 2007-8 school year and ongoing.
7. Report to MISA: Our MISA team developed report to MISA, to assist other schools within the DDSB and MISA (July 2007). A key finding was that we identified the need to streamline data collection to support sustainability eg: use of attendance v. survey to identify participation in preparation activities. By spending most time on analysis of pre-test data, school and individual student reports we could identify trends in student needs and effectiveness of programs.



REFLECTIONS & ACTIONS:

1. Department Heads and staff appreciate the need for data informed leadership, as modelled using Marzano's books, "Classroom Instruction That Works", "Background Knowledge" and "School Leadership That Works". Staff has and continues to implement ideas from these books to promote literacy.
2. We identified the need and methods to simplify data collection to enable staff time to be spent on analysis, reflection and planning based on the data and to promote sustainability of data informed decision making in this and other areas. Use of data templates with a consistent format for key indicators has made comparing school OSSLT results from year-year much easier, again promoting a focus on analysis and planning.
3. Our research confirmed that current preparation initiatives are making a difference for our students' OSSLT success rates. This has encouraged staff to continue supporting these initiatives.
4. Our Literacy Committee is using data to review and revise preparation initiatives both during the year (using pre-test to adapt preparation) and based on OSSLT reports each June. This process is continuing into the 2007-2008 school year.
5. Data indicated the need to revise our school deferral process. We will continue to monitor this process in the 2007-2008.
6. Staff frustration based on previous comparison of reported overall school success rates has been moderated by our more detailed analysis. Key in this was recognition of the impact of demographics re: percentages of students working at the academic, applied and essential levels compared with other schools. While aiming for a further increase in our overall success rate, we have achieved significant improvement in our essential and special education success rates (2007). We will now look for ways to achieve improvement for students working at the applied level (our largest demographic segment) and males, in 2007-2008.
7. We hope to identify additional successful strategies for improving our students' OSSLT success through the MISA project results of other schools and boards. These successful strategies will be brought to the attention of our Literacy Committee for implementation.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO MISA PROFESSIONAL NETWORK CENTRE

We hope our OSSLT preparation strategies and simple data collection and analysis strategies and results can assist other schools and boards in improving their OSSLT success rates. We also hope to learn from others through the MISA network.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We would like to continue our current process applied to new or revised literacy preparation initiatives in the future. We would welcome the opportunity to continue this project at least into the 2007-2008 school year. A connection with our Family of Schools (feeder schools) in this initiative would be interesting and could pay dividends in student OSSLT success as literacy development occurs over a continuum.

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