

# Trillium Woods Elementary Public School

**Simcoe County District School Board**  
Barrie, Ontario

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## Some Snapshots

### Students ...

- enjoy a full range of activities and clubs (e.g., sports, Greenteam, school musical, chess, choir, reading club)
- take part in daily fitness activities (as part of "Healthy Active Schools") as well as more traditional sports (e.g., volleyball, basketball, football, rugby, track and field)
- fundraise for *Schools 4 Schools* and other projects for students around the world
- are proud to "Commit to Character" – enjoying recognition at regular assemblies for such qualities as integrity, optimism, empathy and courage

### Parents ...

- enjoy the school's open door policy
- appreciate the high visibility of staff, their approachability, and their timely responses to parent questions and student needs
- support a caring and dedicated School Council



## About the school ...

Trillium Woods is a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 school in Barrie, a central Ontario city that has experienced significant growth in recent years, with an influx of newcomers not only from other parts of Canada but from across the world. The student population, of approximately 530 children, mirrors the demographic changes of Barrie, representing many different cultures, languages and economic circumstances. The school motto *We inspire our community of learners to achieve – We believe* is a promise to improve practice and increase success for both students and their families.

While the school has worked hard to create its safe, inclusive and child-centred learning environment, the improvements in student learning are linked most dramatically to improvements in adult learning – "We go out of our way to keep learning," is how a teacher describes the focus of the school's efforts. Students have reaped the benefits as their teachers have wrestled collectively with achievement data, identified gaps in learning and adjusted instruction accordingly – "You can feel the energy in the building – we feel privileged to be here!"

## Ongoing improvement ...

Significant improvements in the Grade 3 assessments, over the last three years, have led to high levels of student achievement. Seventy-six per cent of students achieved at or above the provincial standard in reading, 94 per cent in writing and 92 per cent in mathematics. In Grade 6 assessments, there have been significant improvements as well. The school's results, in all assessment areas, are above the board and provincial results. This reflects the commitment of the staff to improve student learning and achievement.

## Success after struggle ...

As teachers deepened their analysis of student achievement results, they shifted their focus from *what* students were learning to *how* students were learning – and this became the focus of their work in PLCs (same grade, division, family of schools). They began by studying the ministry's *Guides to Effective Instruction* and undertaking a cross-grade research inquiry to get a global picture of instruction at the school. Then they worked at developing consistency for instructional practice and a common language for all. The PLCs provided opportunities for teachers

to explore new instructional strategies, review resources, look at assessment data and study student work samples. They also visited “collaboration classrooms” in other schools and welcomed teachers into their classroom to further discuss and reflect on effective instructional practice. This information was then used to inform discussions regarding the literacy and numeracy foci identified in the School Improvement Plan. PLC work helped staff develop a collaborative process for tackling school issues and an improved ability to respect both the strengths of individuals and the value of partnerships.

The data analysis identified significant gaps in student skill and understanding in mathematics. As staff reflected on these data, they identified gaps in their own practice, including over-use of paper/pencil activities, addressing all of the curriculum expectations and lack of engagement of particular groups of students, especially boys. This recognition led not to retrenchment but to openness to explore how they might teach mathematics differently, exploring with colleagues from another school an inquiry approach. The decision was made to implement a problem-solving approach to mathematics, in particular the three-step lesson model. Students were encouraged to select appropriate manipulatives and support each other’s learning in small groups. Technology, including SMART Boards, was acquired along with mathematical games to reinforce and consolidate learning.

## Teaching, learning and leading ...

**Consistency across the grades.** Teachers have worked persistently to ensure a high degree of consistency in language and instructional strategies from classroom to classroom and grade to grade. Their success is directly attributed to the discussions, planning sessions and implementation of effective learning strategies that have resulted from their PLCs. There is an observable continuity in the use of learning resources, such as anchor charts, exemplars and “hands-on” word walls for both math and literacy. As the students move between grades, they focus on building their skills rather than figuring out what is expected in different classrooms. Timetabling ensures like-grade teacher planning and uninterrupted daily literacy and numeracy blocks.

**Use of data for informed instruction.** Critically analyzing data to identify evidence of student achievement and growth and to target key areas of need is essential to setting specific learning objectives. Teachers use their professional knowledge and data from a variety of sources,



such as EQAO, AEL, CASI, PM Benchmarks and ONAP, to plan, differentiate and adjust instruction. Data walls are regularly updated and teachers discuss trends, strategies and best practices during PLCs. Selected students are tracked through a case management model that promotes dialogue and informs instructional decisions.

**Shared leadership.** Trillium Woods supports shared leadership among students, staff, families and community support agencies. The staff encourages the collaboration of parents and students in planning activities, such as curriculum presentations, assemblies and volunteer activities. “You don’t have to worry about distributed leadership in this building – we’re all in it together,” in the words of the principal. Staff welcomes co-op students from the local secondary school, teacher candidates from the faculty of education and students enrolled in child and youth worker programs at the local community college to join in this dynamic learning community.

“Staff had to look outward ... and come out of comfort zones.” *Teacher*

“We expect success.” *Teacher*

“All of the students are my students.” *Teacher*

“If a strategy works for kids in Grade 2 then keep using it – even into high school. Why would we deprive students of a strategy as they move into the next classroom?” *Superintendent*

## Moving into the future

- ◆ learn more about how to integrate technology in classrooms to enhance learning in mathematics and literacy
- ◆ increase knowledge and understanding of the three-part lesson, using real-life problem solving and further integrating manipulatives into math lessons
- ◆ refine assessment and data analysis to better identify student strengths, needs and next steps
- ◆ broaden knowledge and implementation of differentiated instruction strategies, with a focus on boys’ literacy