

The Valleys Senior Public School

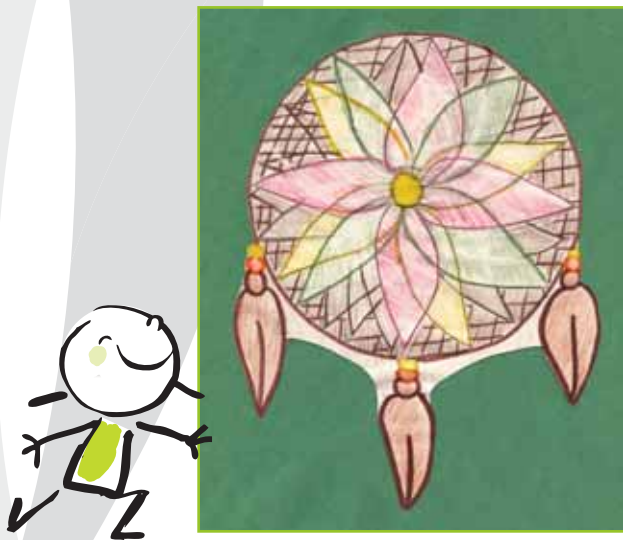
Peel District School Board Mississauga, Ontario

CONTACT INFORMATION

Principal: Diana Fowlie
Phone: 905-275-5125
Email: diana.fowlie@peelsb.com
Website:
<http://thevalleysr.peelschools.org>

Mailing Address:

The Valleys Senior Public School
1235 Mississauga Valley Boulevard
Mississauga, ON
L5A 3R8



About the school ...

The Valleys is a school of 600 students in central Mississauga – a city on the 401 just outside Toronto that is the first stop for many newcomer families to Canada. A number of The Valleys' students spend less than a full year in the school, and the majority (60 per cent) do not speak English as their first language at home.

Offering a multitude of citizenship, arts and athletic activities, working closely with the adjacent community centre and keeping the building open seven days a week, this Grade 6 to 8 school is a hive of action and excitement. And at the centre is the commitment to student learning. Parents marvel at the effort that teachers put into knowing their children and ensuring that learning is happening for all of them. "Teachers seem to know all the students. They make personal connections and help kids find and develop their interests and passions ... teachers get their best in the classroom because they see them at their best outside the classroom." All members of Valleys' staff – principal, teachers and support staff – are involved in goal setting for student success.

Some Snapshots

Students ...

- take part in leadership and citizenship opportunities, such as Me to We, Freedom Writers and Peer Pals
- participate in various councils and fine arts, music and athletic activities
- enjoy a range of choices within both the classroom and the wider school community

Parents ...

- take advantage of the open door policy, dropping by as their schedules permit
- appreciate efforts to make the school a place their children want to be
- credit the school with helping their children find and develop interests and passions

Ongoing improvement ...

The Valleys Senior Public School has met the needs of their students in a multicultural setting. This is confirmed by the significant increases in the Grade 6 results on the most recent EQAO assessments. There has been steady improvement over the last five years. Over the past three years, results have improved between 10 and 13 percentage points in reading, writing and mathematics. These improvements reflect the commitment of the staff.

Success after struggle ...

Teachers at the school point out that it is not always comfortable to acknowledge they don't have all of the answers, but what is evident is their support for one another's professional learning. Their professional dialogue is going much deeper as they collaborate to determine those strategies that best meet the student's needs.

Grade-level teams have begun to see themselves as not only responsible for teaching their content area, but for specific skills within the curriculum expectations that are common and can be identified through curriculum mapping. Thoughtful planning (using backward design carefully crafted into a teaching-learning critical pathway) has contributed to enhanced instructional practices of teachers and greater achievement by students. Staff members are seeing the potential of this approach as they collect baseline data from multiple sources, moderate results, determine greatest areas of need, teach specifically and explicitly, and then once again measure the results through a common assessment.

Teaching, learning and leading ...

Differentiated instruction. With their board's support, teachers focus on explicit teaching of specific skills. Teaching strategies are structured to match student strengths and needs. A cross-curricular integrated approach clarifies for students what is expected of them, provides common messages and reinforces learning. Taking action to address student needs, teachers have realized the importance of integrating the instruction of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. A thorough examination of question types and rich response formats has changed teaching practice.

Strategic use of technology. Teaching with technology gives teachers the ability to "hook" kids on learning. Software resources are carefully chosen for their application to curriculum expectations and capacity to extend learning. At The Valleys, technology provides a teaching tool that enhances the use of graphic organizers and engages students in higher-order thinking and problem solving.

Regular assessment and analysis. Close examination of data from classroom assessments, report cards and EQAO provides the basis to identify those students who, on a particular topic or for a specific skill, would benefit from small group teaching and practice. This allows teachers to target instruction in response to student need. Flexible groupings and timetabling adjustments enable teachers to maximize the time and opportunity to work with those students who need additional support.

Formal and informal leadership. The principal and the staff build strategically on each other's strengths to provide leadership and instruction that maximizes teaching and learning. Leadership among



staff takes shape in a variety of formal and informal ways including grade-level chairs, subject-specific team leaders, school success action teams and technology leader to name a few.

"It's a place where kids want to be. They know they can go beyond the classroom." *Parent*

"We've got to go with the tempo. We're beyond the age of talk and chalk." *Teacher*

"We have high expectations of ourselves, not just of the kids." *Teacher*

"People feel validated when you recognize their strengths and support them in using those strength with students." *Principal*

"Students need to know when they come here, they're known." *Principal*

"My role is to coach and support. My role is about teaching and learning." *Superintendent*

Moving into the future

- ◆ continue to refine and share evidence-informed strategies and skills and develop common grade-level assessment instruments
- ◆ broaden the opportunities for sharing daily best practices – build in time for professional dialogue, reflection, problem solving and practice
- ◆ increase the level of parental involvement in student learning despite language barriers and time constraints