

Archbishop O'Sullivan Catholic School

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board Kingston, Ontario

CONTACT INFORMATION

Principal: Susan Murray

Phone: 613-389-1891

Email: murrays@alcdsb.on.ca

Website:

<http://schools.alcdsb.on.ca/abos/default.aspx>

Mailing Address:

Archbishop O'Sullivan

Catholic School

974 Pembridge Crescent

Kingston, ON

K7P 1A3



Some Snapshots

Students ...

- know that they can depend on all staff members
- explain their thinking and make links to their lives
- work as student secretaries, morning announcers, recyclers, peer helpers and reading buddies
- take leadership roles as classroom buddies

Parents ...

- are encouraged to come together to form relationships and directly support the learning and achievement of students
- enjoy regular newsletters sent by teachers with tips on how to support literacy and numeracy at home
- contribute as fundraisers (monthly bingos) and volunteers

About the school ...

Archbishop O'Sullivan is a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 school in the west end of Kingston, a city rich in Canadian military and cultural history sitting on the Rideau Canal in the St. Lawrence Seaway. The school serves a population of approximately 290 students, many from the local middle-class neighbourhood.

The philosophy of inclusiveness lies at the heart of this family-first school. Home to the board's Student Support Centre program (Grades 5-8), staff and students alike ensure that these students feel welcomed and accepted. They not only are fully integrated into classrooms but they also take part in every aspect of school life, from field trips to sports teams to leadership opportunities. Staff members believe that each student has gifts and talents, whether academic, spiritual or athletic, and they work hard to bring out each student's best. Everyone takes responsibility for the students in the school so that each child feels safe and secure and develops the confidence needed to learn, take risks and experience success. In the words of the principal, "We make school the most stable environment we can in order to provide our students with what they need to learn."

Ongoing improvement ...

There has been steady improvement in the Grade 6 EQAO assessment results since 2004-05. In reading and writing, the results are above the provincial target. The Grade 3 assessment results have also improved by between 11 and 19 percentage points. There have been increases in results in all six assessment areas, with 79 per cent of students achieving at or above the provincial standard in Grade 3 and 6 reading and writing, 73 per cent in Grade 3 mathematics and 72 per cent in Grade 6 mathematics. This reflects a strong commitment to student learning and achievement.

Success after struggle ...

Everyone in the school had come to believe that setting high expectations for each student would result in markedly improved achievement for all students. Yet they struggled with setting ambitious targets - what if they could not meet them? Now they are using assessment data (e.g., running records) and tracking to identify students who are not meeting targets and putting specific interventions into place as required - an approach that is appreciated, perhaps most deeply by parents. As one said, "My three children had different learning styles and everyone helped each of them to do their best and experience success."

A major goal for staff was to develop consistency of practice and grade-to-grade coherence across the school. This required that they find ways to work together – and find a focus – as a professional learning community. Embracing the professional learning approach of the board, staff began to work in teams in order to identify student needs and to put in place a school-wide plan to meet them, including their own targeted professional learning.

Teaching, learning and leading ...

Early intervention and support for struggling students. Common assessments are administered to Kindergarten students to help teachers identify those who need more intensive support. Grade 1 teachers identify students immediately in September who have not mastered the alphabet and/or sounds. A structure has been put into place that allows for timely intervention for small groups as well as for individual students. All Primary students are encouraged to participate in the volunteer-run Reading Is Fun Club, which encourages children to read books at home with adults.

Regularly scheduled PLC meetings. Using the teaching-learning critical pathway process, teachers look at student data to determine the area of greatest need, decide on a cluster of expectations, choose a text and develop a higher-order open response question. They administer this question to their students to gather baseline data. As a group they review and come to consensus on students' written responses. Based on what they learn about their students' needs, they decide on the evidence-based strategies that they will use to improve student learning and achievement. After a period of six to eight weeks of explicit teaching, at the next PLC meeting, the teachers moderate their student responses. They examine assessment data and discuss the progress of all students. Teachers share what they are doing that is making a difference in their classes.

Teacher-to-teacher mentoring. Archbishop O'Sullivan plays an exceptional role in mentoring future generations of teachers, providing placements throughout the school year to teacher candidates from Queen's, Potsdam and Nipissing universities. They also provide co-op placements to students from Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School and St. Lawrence College. While classroom teachers share their experience, knowledge and skills, they are also given an opportunity to keep up with the most-up-to date research and practices taking place at



high school, college and university. Staff members also welcome their school network's Special Assignment teacher into their classrooms to model lessons in problem solving, read alouds, shared reading and so on. They are enthusiastic participants in network and board workshops that provide training in assistive technology, SMART Boards, literacy, assessment and preparation for EQAO.

Instructional leadership. The board has created networks of principals across the district to support the growth of a community of leaders focused on instruction. Each network holds monthly meetings (with the Special Assignment teacher and the Principal of School Effectiveness). Archbishop O'Sullivan's principal appreciates the focus on instructional leadership at these meetings and the opportunity to learn with other administrators. As an instructional leader, she looks outward to other networks and initiatives (e.g., OFIP) for lessons that will inform her school's ongoing improvement work. All staff take part in recording collective goals – they then revisit what they have committed to as a team and hold themselves accountable for providing opportunities for all of their students. No one is left off the team – they all take on leadership roles in ensuring student success.

"Knowing what we do is valued encourages us to volunteer in the school. We're taking home as much as we are giving." *Parent*

"We see and hear about the good work of our colleagues and we think we could do that too." *Teacher*

"One volunteer can make a difference." *Principal*

Moving into the future

- ◆ learn more about using technology more effectively in the classroom to engage all learners, as well as having students who have assistive technology use it effectively to access the curriculum
- ◆ learn more about teaching and learning in numeracy, especially problem solving
- ◆ learn more about effective differentiated instruction practices, in particular how we can meet the needs of boys and of students with special needs
- ◆ learn more about strategies to deepen reading comprehension