

# Agincourt Road Public School

## Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Ottawa, Ontario

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### About the school ...

Agincourt is a dual-track school in Ottawa's west end, a mature residential neighbourhood that is home to many new Canadian families. This Kindergarten to Grade 5 school reflects the diversity of the neighbourhood it serves, enrolling about 500 students who represent about 25 different languages and cultures. The majority of these students are in the French Immersion stream.

Agincourt engages constantly with the world outside the school to enhance and strengthen its program. The Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) provides Volunteers in Education tutors and IBM Canada gives staff time off during the day to come and read to students. The University of Ottawa provides both a monitrice de la langue française and a classroom tutor. The Ottawa Citizen provides anti-bullying resources while Ottawa's Healthy Schools Program offers students hot lunches and a milk program. "Dance Umbrella" and "Artists in Residence" support the school's art program. These partnerships and others like them help students expand their interests, deepen their understanding, practise their skills in authentic situations and build confidence as citizens and learners.

### Some Snapshots

#### Students ...

- are very active in EcoKids and weekly composting club
- participate in Young Authors Days to share their writing with others
- act as lunch monitors, playground PALS, Kindergarten helpers and "bookbugs"

#### Parents ...

- access the School Council volunteer database to find out how to support their children and their school community
- devote many hours to provide additional attention and encouragement to students experiencing difficulties
- take part in family evenings (e.g., "How to Better Understand the Report Card," "How to Assist Your Child to Learn French When You Can't Speak French Yourself" and the very popular "Math Mission Night")

### Ongoing improvement ...

Results on the 2007-08 EQAO assessments show excellent improvement in all Grade 3 assessments since 2005-06. The Grade 3 reading and writing results both increased by 15 percentage points, while mathematics results increased by 25 percentage points. These results were significantly above the board and provincial results and accomplished while facing educationally challenging circumstances.

### Success after struggle ...

The journey at Agincourt began with the shift to shared responsibility and collaborative practice. For example, an inventory of student and teacher materials indicated that there had been much duplication in some areas and a complete lack of resources in others. Staff decided to transform their frustration into action, cataloguing materials and organizing them in resource rooms. Access to this catalogue is now available to teachers on the school's internal server. Professional learning was also identified as a need and plans were established to identify individuals in the system that could assist in providing support. While these steps caused some discomfort, staff members were

encouraged by the determination and support of the administration. Recognizing the value of their actions, staff and administration have continued to move forward, to reflect, to engage in dialogue, to take risks, to share their expertise and to monitor the impact on student learning.

As staff learned more about each other's strengths and expertise, the conversation about student learning at the school deepened, generating more opportunities to learn from and with each other. Staff began to see and to respect each other as mentors and take advantage of the opportunity to tap collective expertise. Leadership from within the school team continues to enrich, sustain and direct the professional learning community. A monthly article in the school newsletter, "Teachers Are Life-Long Learners," highlights and celebrates with parents and students the accomplishments and successes of the staff.

## Teaching, learning and leading ...

**Building an inclusive environment.** Diversity is highly valued by the whole school community. Special events and sharing activities are occasions to develop understanding for other cultures and traditions. Respecting one another's ethnic origin and culture is a point of pride among students, staff and parents.

**Celebrating student progress.** Plans are initiated for students experiencing difficulty and advances in their learning are celebrated as they move forward. In the school's welcoming, supportive environment, children are encouraged daily to "do their best" and are given skills to self-assess and take responsibility for their work.

**Monitoring student learning.** Teachers at Agincourt use data walls to track student progress in reading. Common assessments at the Primary level (GB+, PM Benchmarks) and Junior level (CASI, Evaluation Rapide) are used to inform teaching practice, identify learning gaps and target those students or groups requiring further attention and support. Interventions are implemented immediately and may include booster groups and individual assistance with trained volunteers. Weekly in-school team meetings are held to monitor student progress and consider further actions.



**Restructuring the classroom for success.** The school established uninterrupted blocks of time for instruction and timetabled in-class resource support during those blocks for the core subjects. Classroom teachers, learning support teachers, educational assistants, Tutors in the Classroom, high school co-op students and volunteers all work together to ensure the success of each student during the core instruction.

**Providing quality resources.** Resource rooms provide quick and easy access to student materials and professional resources that support effective instruction. Currently, there is an emphasis on establishing levelled classroom libraries that will enhance both home reading and the classroom program. In addition to the math resource room, every classroom has its own set of math manipulatives.

"The extra help now is in the classroom and that's been absolutely huge and it is important that it is happening now in French Immersion too, supporting children instead of just moving them out." *Parent*

"It was important for all of us to sit down together and have someone there to support the moderated marking." *Teacher*

"My philosophy is that school has to be an inviting place where parents, children and teachers want to be." *Principal*

## Moving into the future

- ◆ learn more about the use of common graphic organizers
- ◆ work on teacher moderation, developing exemplars and the use of the electronic data wall
- ◆ investigate strategies to improve students' use of writing conventions
- ◆ acquire more strategies to integrate character development
- ◆ develop additional expertise in the arts curriculum