

Allan A. Greenleaf School

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Waterdown, Ontario

CONTACT INFORMATION

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About the school ...

Allan A. Greenleaf is a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 school in Waterdown, a rapidly growing community just north of the heavily industrialized port city of Hamilton. The school's setting is at once urban and rural, bordering on the fields of the original town. Just over 700 students attend, with the school welcoming Grades 7 and 8 students from other schools in the vicinity.

At the heart of the Greenleaf school community is an active commitment to student potential – all students need to be successful, all students can learn and all students should be engaged in their learning. Equally high on the school agenda is citizenship and character development. From involving students in recycling and monitoring the school's environmental footprint to engaging them in their own assessments, Greenleaf is all about supporting students in becoming responsible citizens.

Ongoing improvement ...

Strategies employed to improve achievement are confirmed by results on the 2007-08 EQAO assessments that showed significant increases over the last three years. Grade 3 assessment results increased by at

Some Snapshots

Students ...

- are keenly involved in their own assessments
- are active participants in both the student and school council
- support and organize key events for the school, for the community and with other schools to raise funds for global issues

Parents ...

- devote a portion of school council meetings to discussing expectations in the Ontario curriculum
- celebrate the increase in achievement scores and support school improvement initiatives
- enjoy Literacy and Numeracy Evenings where they learn more about how their children are taught and pick up practical ideas to support their children's learning at home

least 21 percentage points in all three assessments. Between 74 and 76 per cent of the students achieved at or above the provincial standard. Grade 6 assessment results increased by at least 32 percentage points in all three assessments. All are above the provincial target of 75 per cent of students achieving the provincial standard.

Success after struggle ...

All partners at Greenleaf attribute their continuing improvement to the development of a culture of collaboration. They describe a series of steps that began with data-informed discussions on how together they could make a difference for their students. This conversation demanded greater openness and required that individuals take risks and be willing to look to each other for assistance and support. Staff appreciated the time to work together and honoured that time by listening, learning, sharing and focusing on the task at hand. As collaboration increased, so did the commitment to teamwork. The resulting environment of mutual respect and risk taking supported even deeper "real" conversations, facilitated the "trickling up" of leadership, fuelling progress in such areas as integrated instruction and teacher moderation. As one teacher said, "We are accountable and that means we need to be able to explain what we do and why we do it."

Teaching, learning and leading ...

Holistic approach. Staff members are committed to teaching the whole child, to attending to both academic and social development. All undertake training to empower students to create a culture of character within the school as well as to ensure that the school is a safe place where a child's moral growth can flourish. The school embraces the importance of reflective practice, with staff and students alike looking carefully at what they are learning, and why, and how to take the necessary steps to close the gaps.

Increased comprehension skills. Improving students' ability to infer meaning from text is a school-wide focus, tackled through a range of approaches. Precise instruction, practice and application are evident both in student responses and in the student writing that is displayed in classrooms and in hallways. There is a strong commitment to providing consistent and continuous instruction across the grade levels with thoughtful planning for the increasing sophistication of each strategy from JK to 8.

Collaborative inquiry in mathematics. Greenleaf has embraced the board's professional learning focus on teaching mathematics through collaborative inquiry and lesson study. Primary, junior and senior teachers are working with each other and other schools to look at how to help students meet the mathematics curriculum expectations. With a young and changing staff, the school also utilizes a mentoring approach to further support learning.

Assessment for learning. Staff feel it is their responsibility to be able to answer the question "How is this working for our students?" They work hard to make connections between assessment and student demonstrations of understanding, curriculum expectations and instructional strategies. They give feedback to students throughout the learning process, ensuring that it is specific, constructive and effective. Teachers deliberately use assessment information to determine how best to engage students and to respond to individual student needs.

Leadership. The principal and vice principal work as a team on all aspects of school leadership and administration. Teachers meet both formally and informally to learn and plan by grade, by division and across the school. Students engage in group work that instigates and extends learning. In academic, extracurricular and school events



the staff, students and parents take advantage opportunities to participate together and support each other. Greenleaf is creating a culture of shared leadership by supporting staff in a range of activities, such as planning Learning Community Days, participating in Directions Meetings and completing Leadership Qualifications. Staff members feel they benefit from the opportunity both to offer leadership and to accept leadership in varying circumstances and at various times. They believe that supporting shared leadership in this way will result in the sustainability of their collective good work.

"They're working end to end in this school, building from year to year on skills and strategies with increasing sophistication. It reduces stress for our kids. It builds confidence." Parent

"We understand the big picture. It's the teaching in the middle between diagnostic and summative that makes the difference." Teacher

"We continuously fuel each other's learning." Teacher

"We maximize the levels of expertise. We count on each other for support." Teacher

"We work hard on student engagement, to provide opportunities and incentives." Teacher

"We always seem to have something special going on." Secretary

Moving into the future

- ◆ learn more about best practices for mathematics and literacy instruction
- ◆ further integrate technology in the classroom to support differentiated instruction
- ◆ develop supports and strategies to improve learning for students who are struggling
- ◆ develop strategies to support the cycle of instruction, assessment and feedback, building in more opportunities for teacher moderation