

Century Public School

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Ottawa, Ontario

CONTACT INFORMATION

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About the school ...

Century Public is a Kindergarten to Grade 6 school originally built in Canada's centennial year on a tree-lined street in Ottawa. Today the school reflects the diversity of the new face of Canada, with some 330 students representing every corner of the world and speaking over 35 different languages. About a third of the students are English language learners, about a quarter have Individual Education Plans and many come from families facing social and economic challenges. The school's commitment to helping students address these challenges is put into practice in daily, deliberate ways. As one parent said, "It's not one big thing. It's all the little things they do to engage children and to set them up to succeed."

The school's approach to teaching mathematics provides an example of how staff fine-tune instruction to build on success for students year on year. From daily announcements highlighting the language of mathematics to a school-wide program to provide a common vocabulary for instruction, teachers collaborate to ensure teaching that is systematic, explicit and rigorous. Students in every grade are immersed in an environment that is rich in math vocabulary, math activities and math manipulatives.

Some Snapshots

Students ...

- participate in "4 Houses" (international character development program sponsored by the Kiwanis Club) – divides the school into 4 houses, Fire, Earth, Wind and Water, and rewards TERRIFIC kids (Thoughtful, Enthusiastic, Respectful, Responsible, Inclusive, Friendly, Inquisitive and Capable)
- run Peacekeepers, an anti-bullying squad that monitors the school yard and helps resolve disputes
- hold B.F.F. (Best Friends Forever) meetings to decide on role models who then do peer-to-peer teaching at assemblies
- deliver morning messages to provoke thinking during the day to create a positive school climate
- write and publish "The Cent" school newspaper for classmates and parents

Parents ...

- run a large and diverse parent council that reflects the student population
- fundraise for library and classroom resources
- serve as volunteers (over 100 individuals support students in the classroom, school and community)
- honour staff and students throughout the year (e.g., multicultural evening with dinner)

Ongoing improvement ...

Significant and steady improvement in all EQAO assessment results is evident over the past three years. Grade 3 assessment results have increased between 22 and 33 percentage points. In 2005-06, Grade 3 reading and writing results were both at 48 per cent of students achieving at or above provincial standard. These results increased to 81 per cent and 74 per cent, respectively. Grade 3 mathematics results increased to 89 per cent. The same steady improvement was evident in the Grade 6 assessments as well. The school results were above both the board and provincial results in all six assessment areas.

Success after struggle ...

In the early stages of their journey, parents, teachers and administrators wrote a simple code of behaviour to help foster respect for diversity and to encourage positive behaviour. They paid attention to social, physical and emotional needs, establishing, for example, a breakfast/lunch program to ensure students had the nourishment to benefit from instruction and a clothing drive so that all could participate in indoor and outdoor activities. Staff made it a priority to set the example for their students – by getting involved in various

activities, being prepared for lessons, demonstrating respect in interactions, engaging as learners themselves and contributing as members of their professional team. These first steps significantly lowered the incidence of discipline issues and allowed for a true focus on student learning.

The OFIP designation, while initially a cause of uncertainty and anxiety, presented an opportunity to discover – and access – the school’s depth of collective knowledge and expertise. Supported by the principal’s strong belief in them, and with time and coaching, teachers developed the confidence to shift from cherished instructional approaches to those that promised to be more effective in improving student learning.

Through ongoing, focused discussions, paired with careful attention to monitoring intent and results, the staff embraced a team approach. The consistency they have built in approaches and terminology is evident across grades, divisions and the school as a whole.

Teaching, learning and leading

Using data for planning, monitoring and supporting. Student progress is closely monitored on the school’s data wall (using PM Benchmarks and CASI). When progress appears to stall, informal running records and observational reading behaviour data are used to provide the information required to allocate additional resources, such as ELL support, Booster Club or tutoring.

Using collaborative practice. Helping students do better is the cornerstone of teachers’ professional discussions held informally throughout the day and during co-planning time. Teachers work together to establish common understanding of promising evidence-based practices, taking a “using” vs. “doing” approach. In this approach, a team of teachers, educational assistants and administrator(s) discuss the focus for a lesson prior to instruction, join in instruction (such as a guided reading session) and debrief the instruction to understand how individual students responded and how they demonstrated their learning.

Supporting thinking. Higher-order thinking strategies are introduced to students both by modelling what such processes as inferring, synthesizing and evaluating look like and by teaching students how to select and use graphic/visual organizers. Students feel empowered when they are able to choose which organizer best represents their thinking, understanding and interpretation of text. Students refer to the exemplars,



rubrics and samples of authentic student work posted in classrooms and hallways. Classroom blogs remind students of best practices. A broad spectrum of engaging and rich resources is available in every classroom and a Literacy Room is filled with carefully selected, high-quality and up-to-date materials.

Fostering leadership from within. Staff, parents and students describe the principal’s high expectations, support for learning, open and inclusive communication style and sense of moral purpose as “contagious”. The principal not only supports risk taking and sharing among staff but has also provided opportunities for coaching support and a significant expansion of resources for both staff and students. These have contributed to the growth of a learning community that is developing leadership from within – from teachers to support staff to parents to students. They know that they can count on each other – that each person can both learn from others and contribute to the learning of others.

“The staff is caring and dedicated – they build children’s self-esteem and their respect not only for themselves but for others.” Parent

“We’ve had to relearn teaching practices.” Teacher

“There’s such a habit of inquiry now. We’re proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish for our kids.” Principal

“There has been a real effort for all involved to adjust their teaching and learning practices in order to address the needs of the individual students in their care.” Superintendent

Moving into the future

- ◆ learn how to use assessment tools and strategies with increased precision, specifically to help students become self-reflective as they examine and internalize what quality work looks and sounds like
- ◆ fine-tune the skill and art of asking open-ended questions in order to develop students’ higher-order thinking skills
- ◆ incorporate technology into literacy and numeracy activities, specifically expanding the use of classroom blogs, podcasting and interactive websites to motivate students (boys in particular) to take greater ownership of their written work