

Dallington Public School

Toronto District School Board Toronto, Ontario

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Some Snapshots

Students ...

- are part of school decision making
- enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities in the arts (e.g., opera, storytelling, gallery visits)
- plan and support special events, such as school spirit days and charity fundraising events (e.g., Food Drive for North York Food Harvest, Sleeping Children Around the World, Spread the Net)

Parents ...

- network with neighborhood school councils to share guest speakers
- present classroom workshops in areas of expertise (e.g., scrapbooking, Photoshop, the planet Mars, creative dance)
- participate in reading to classes in their first languages

About the school ...

Dallington is a dual track English/French Immersion school in the Don Mills/Sheppard area of Toronto. Of the 460 students who attend, about 40 per cent were born outside Canada and a third have lived here for less than five years. The vast majority of the student population in this Kindergarten to Grade 6 school speak a language other than English, while many are learning English (or French) as a third or fourth language.

Dallington is all about student learning and school improvement. Staff members say "all excuses are off the table" when it comes to learning, and together they look for and create opportunities to help students succeed. All teachers are members of one of the four school improvement teams: literacy, numeracy, creating a safe and caring school, and science and technology. Additional working committees are formed as specific needs are identified.

Ongoing improvement ...

All Grade 3 and 6 EQAO results have improved significantly over the past five years. In 2007-08, at least 90 per cent of Grade 6 students achieved at or above the provincial standard of 75 per cent. Grade 3 assessment results have increased between 22 and 24 percentage points. All assessment results are significantly above the board and provincial results.

Success after struggle ...

The staff are clear that it was examination of data from schools in similar challenging circumstances that led to the conviction that effective instructional approaches could indeed make a difference for the students at Dallington. Staff members continue to gather and analyze data to support improved student learning. Both administration and staff attribute their "no excuses" approach to increased motivation and learning on the part of both students and adults in the school community.

The school team reconfigured the timetable to allow teachers common blocks of planning time so that they could share resources, develop common assessments, address concerns and explore effective strategies. Time spent together resulted in greater continuity of instruction, common understandings and shared emphasis on the use of anchor charts and visual organizers.

As the school acquired text materials and math manipulatives, organizing these resources for ease of access and effective use in classrooms became more important. After central organization was complete, all rooms were given a bin with recommended manipulatives per grade as per the ministry's expert panel report. Each teacher was provided with funds to build or expand a classroom library to support students' independent reading. To support the use of math manipulatives, professional development was provided with a focus on problem-solving approaches.

Teaching, learning and leading ...

Early identification and intervention. The school team is committed to early identification and intervention for children not meeting the provincial standard. There are many opportunities during and beyond the hours of instruction for students to work in small groups to expand their skills and improve their achievement.

Review cycle. At the end of October, data are collected from the following sources: Observation Survey, DRA, CASI, Sondage d'Observation, Alpha-Jeunes, EQAO, First Steps Reading and Writing continua and report card data. Teachers are given their class profiles (or average level per class identified for each question in CASI) and identify children at risk and/or strategies requiring greater focus (e.g., making connections). Teachers then plan for intervention (e.g., early reading intervention, reading recovery, Primary reading club, boys' reading club Primary and Junior, speech and language referrals, hearing and vision checks). Results for students who are at risk are revisited at the end of January.

Metacognitive skills. Teaching focuses on how to learn and how students can be reflective about the strategies they are using in reading, writing and problem solving. Students are also taught to attend to and integrate the habits of effective readers, listeners and speakers.



Supports for writing. Teachers help children make connections between talk and effective writing. Instructional rubrics and exemplars show students what good writing looks like. Peer editing is modelled and supported.

Distributed leadership. While staff members and parents alike attribute the buzz around student learning and achievement to the expectations and commitment of the principal, they enjoy a sense of shared leadership with administration. Teachers provide leadership in their areas of expertise and interest, and share their learning with one another to help make a difference for student learning.

"As teachers we are constantly making adjustments so that our students are successful in literacy – whether the wind is at our back or blowing against us." *Teacher*

"I like to collect my own sampling of student writing to see how students are doing. First-hand information is so valuable." *Principal*

"School teams share leadership as they solve challenges. Everyone takes ownership, people step up to the plate. The staff are not reluctant to voice ideas." *Vice Principal*

Moving into the future

- ◆ how to use technology to engage reluctant readers and writers by making learning more interactive and bringing the world into the classroom
- ◆ how to plan for integrated teaching of various curricula (science and social studies within the English/French block)
- ◆ how to focus less time on the actual collection of data and more time on "which instructional practices will lead to improved outcomes"
- ◆ how to teach English or French as a third or fourth language