

Orde Street Public School

Toronto District School Board Toronto, Ontario

CONTACT INFORMATION

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About the school ...

Orde Street Public School is located in downtown Toronto's Chinatown, an area filled with shops and restaurants as well as hospitals, colleges, museums and libraries. Built in 1914 to accommodate an early 20th century wave of immigration, this Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6 school continues today to support many children and families who are new to Canada. Orde receives students from across the world, including those whose parents come on foreign exchange to study medicine or other specialized subjects. The school records about 30 different countries of origin, and many different languages, among its present student body of 300.

Staff members emphasize that differentiated instruction fine-tuned to learning style and needs is key to helping students reach their potential. Teachers strive to give students freedom and flexibility to facilitate self-expression as well as expose them to resources that reflect a range of identities and engage diverse interests. They make every effort to design authentic learning experiences that connect students to the world around them and build on their background experiences. Yet this individuated approach is just one side of the equation; staff members learned over the course of several years of change and

Some Snapshots

Students ...

- participate in a wide variety of multicultural activities and events
- enjoy a comprehensive Phys. Ed. program with a focus on healthy living, fitness and inclusiveness
- take part in monthly character assemblies, celebrating students who have demonstrated such qualities as integrity, cooperation and kindness and caring

Parents ...

- serve on a small but active school council, with several sub-committees including a communications group that disseminates information on an internal school website for all parents to access
- enjoy lots of communication with the school, including online monthly community newsletters

reflection that if they wanted all of their students to succeed, they needed to instill more consistency in their practices.

Ongoing improvement ...

Over the past three years, achievement has increased significantly in all six EQAO assessment areas. In the Grade 3 assessments, 74 per cent of the students achieved at or above the provincial standard in reading, 84 per cent in writing and 81 per cent in mathematics. Over 90 per cent of students achieved at or above the provincial standard in Grade 6 reading, writing and mathematics. These results demonstrate the outstanding commitment of a downtown urban school.

Success after struggle ...

Staff members knew that they had to change their approach when they realized that many students had significant gaps in their learning as they moved from grade to grade. The starting point for their work together was to gather and analyze data, identifying where students were in their learning and which instructional strategies were making a difference. Supported by their designation as a TDSB Early Years Literacy Project (EYLP) school, they undertook professional learning,

including that offered by their onsite literacy coordinator (also the DRA trainer for Orde's family of schools), and took advantage of every opportunity to plan, discuss, share, compare and learn from one another. "Simplicity ... Consistency ... Continuity" emerged as their watchwords for the transition to a more whole-school approach. As teachers began to build on the work done by others in previous grades, they noted that the children benefited, even coming to expect the structures that supported their learning to continue across the grades. Staff came to see the advantages of having a common understanding of instructional language and of teaching and assessment strategies, a focused acquisition of resources and a school-wide plan tying everything together.

The staff focus has shifted, in their own words, "from worrying about covering the curriculum" to "assessing students' knowledge, determining their most critical needs for learning and monitoring their learning." Some describe this as a shift from *teaching* to *learning*.

Teaching, learning and leading ...

Structured learning time. Orde provides a comprehensive literacy program within a two-hour learning block, with every classroom having routines in place to support students as they work independently, in pairs and in small groups. In addition to supporting a large number of English language learners, Orde offers middle French Immersion (Grades 4 to 6), as well as substantial programming for challenged learners – so structured learning time and routines that allow one-to-one teaching as well as small group conferencing has been key to improved student results.

Writing wall. Students use exemplars, graphic organizers, rubrics, checklists and other learning supports to develop their writing. The teacher models effective writing and conferences with students as they move through the writing process of planning, drafting, writing, revising, editing and publishing. The writing wall provides teachers and students with the opportunity to go back in time (month by month) and to both celebrate and identify changes that mark students' progress. The writing displayed on the wall is not the only writing taking place in the classroom. Students write daily for a variety of purposes.



Orde's Assessment Bin. The OAB houses formal assessments (observation survey, running records, writing samples, diagnostic reading assessment and report card marks) that track student progress from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The staff are in the process of extending the OAB to junior grades.

"The focus of this school is without a doubt my child's learning." Parent

"They want the best thing for my child ... but somehow keep in mind the needs of all the others." Parent

"Frequent opportunities to meet, learn, collaborate and build our knowledge as a staff have helped us to better meet the different needs of our students." Teacher

Every child comes to this school with different circumstances." Teacher

"There is a great deal of choice for kids to get involved in the life of this school." Principal

Moving into the future

- ◆ transition from being an EYLP school to one that will no longer have the same level of human and material resources and to help preserve the learning and keep the conversation going
- ◆ focus on numeracy, particularly problem solving in mathematics
- ◆ expand assessment connections across the school
- ◆ write a school manual that will document our "best" literacy practices and inform planning in every classroom