

Improvement in EQAO scores has been remarkable. In the primary assessment, reading, writing and mathematics scores have more than doubled in three years. In the junior assessment, reading and writing scores have improved by more than 20 per cent in three years. Each month, there is a Celebration of Learning assembly where students and staff are recognized for their ongoing commitment to learning. Individuals are recognized for their achievements in various areas, from athletics and being friendly on the bus, to pure academics and the arts. This is a reminder that everyone can achieve!

Teaching, learning and leading ...

Teacher learning through PLCs. As teachers learn from one another within grade level, productive strategies spread throughout divisions. Weekly PLC meetings enable teachers to work together to develop, plan and implement goals. Staff members feel a common bond to improve student learning and achievement. At PLCs teachers are investigating and promoting effective strategies to enhance student achievement. These short/long-term foci change as the results improve, and teachers and students move forward to tackle new challenges.

Focus on instructional practice. Westminster's ambitious school improvement plan, developed in collaboration with its families of schools, supports the board's strategic plan to achieve a 90 per cent high school graduation rate. However, while staff members acknowledge that effective planning is important, they understand that reaching students comes about through great teaching. Explicit teaching practices and modelling have helped to improve teaching and learning across the school. The use of anchor charts has enabled teachers to demonstrate the desired end product of student work. Quality mentor texts are used across grades.

Differentiated instruction. Literacy groups based on data collected from a variety of assessment tools (including PM Benchmarks, CASI and teacher observations) have been an essential part of instructional practice at Westminster and have led to solid literacy acquisition. The groups are flexible, fluid and responsive to student needs and learning styles. The data collected to group students are also used to create a focus for collaborative planning. Using small group instruction has allowed teachers to maintain the same expectations for students,



and cover the same content, while tailoring their lessons to the specific learning needs of the individual children.

Use of assistive technology. The needs of many students are met through the use of assistive technology. Instruction in the use of assistive programs, such as Word Q and Kurzweil, allows students to become more independent and improve their self-esteem. Resource teachers, classroom teachers and board-level specialists collaborate to identify individual needs. Individual learning plans are developed and techniques are incorporated (e.g., scribes technology) to ensure success for students.

"We have chances to shine – we're almost forced to shine in at least one thing." *Student*

"All teachers know all the kids – not just the ones in their own classes." *Teacher*

"Teachers here have changed my children's lives." *Parent*

"Raising kids is a two-part job – home and school – both are reflected here in the faces of the children." *Parent*

"Older kids take responsibility and leadership for what happens at school – they feel valued and respected." *Parent*

"This school was known for athletics. Now, students want to be 'smart' athletes." *Principal*

Moving into the future

- ◆ increase focus on using data from a variety of sources, such as PM Benchmarks, CASI, EQAO and PRIME Mathematics to improve teaching, learning and achievement
- ◆ implement and model explicit teaching practices during numeracy and literacy blocks with an emphasis on higher-order thinking and problem solving
- ◆ continue to provide time for PLCs during the school day
- ◆ encourage parents, guardians and community agencies to become partners in student success and continue to learn together