



## MEASURING PROGRESS ON LEARNING Report No. 16-125

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)

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### Learning Objective - By 2019, the District will improve the achievement of students in all educational pathways.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board identified learning as one of five key priority areas for the 2015-2019 strategic plan. In the plan, learning for the District is described as “a culture which develops creative, confident and engaged learners who model the Characteristics and Skills expressed in our Exit Outcomes for graduates”. The objective states: “By 2019, the District will improve the achievement of students in all educational pathways”. The strategies to support this objective are:

- “Promote and encourage the personalization of learning and enhance instructional practice to meet the individual needs of learners”;
- “Improve and increase access to the educational pathways for every student”;  
and
- “Optimize School Learning Plans to develop strategies to support achievement in targeted areas (e.g. numeracy and literacy)”.

Each year, schools boards develop a Board Improvement Plan and submit it to the Ministry of Education. In 2015-2016, the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement included strategies and goals targeted in four areas – literacy; numeracy; pathways; and community, culture, and caring. To report on the progress being made and identify areas of focus for the subsequent Board Improvement Plan, the OCDSB produces an Annual Student Achievement Report each fall. The Annual Student Achievement Report focuses on district-level data and results from provincial assessments. This data is used to measure progress on learning – which, as mentioned above, was identified as a strategic priority in the 2015-2019 strategic plan. Given the common focus of the Annual Student Achievement Report and the measurement report on learning, the two reports have been aligned. This report on the OCDSB’s progress on learning includes qualitative evidence of progress being made, as well as quantitative data demonstrating achievement trends, both of which inform the goals and targets of the 2016-2017 Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being (BIPSA/WB).

## Measures

Recent work serves as qualitative evidence for the progress being made in the area of learning. This includes:

- Data Literacy and Pedagogical Documentation sessions;
- Reflective summaries of School Learning Plans; and
- Professional development for staff.

Furthermore, the following quantitative measures provide evidence of progress on the learning objective:

- Provincial assessment data (EQAO);
- Report card data;
- Cohort graduation rate and annual certification rate; and
- Grade 12 French Proficiency: Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELFP).

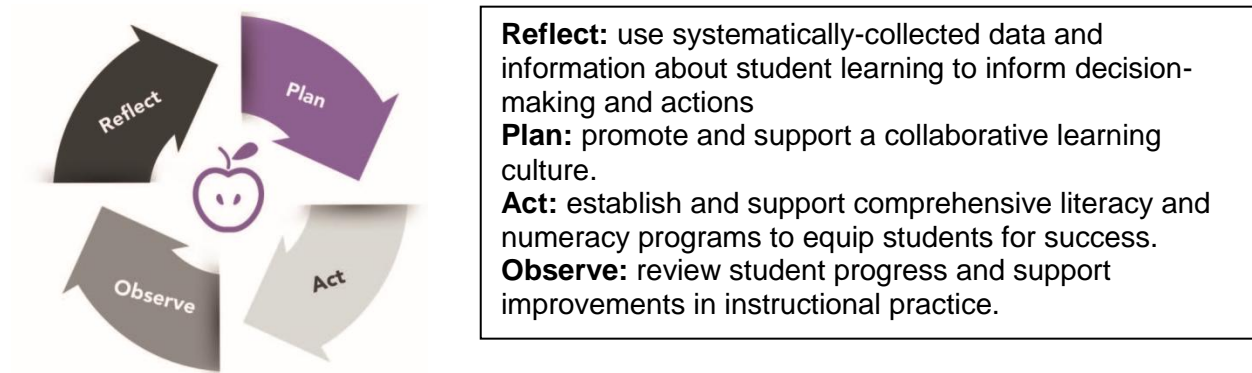
### Data Literacy and Pedagogical Documentation sessions

In the fall of 2015, school teams gathered together for data literacy sessions. With the support of central staff, these sessions were focused on building capacity within school teams to access, use, and interpret multiple sources of data. The goal of these sessions was to consider the evidence and make informed decisions to improve student learning, achievement and well-being. This work informed school teams in their development of School Learning Plans. In 2015-2016, 92% of elementary schools and 86% of secondary schools attended Data Literacy sessions.

Feedback from elementary school teams in 2014-2015 highlighted the need for additional capacity building in pedagogical documentation as a tool for gathering evidence to inform practice. As such, in 2015-2016 elementary school teams were provided with the opportunity to gather for an additional half day (in addition to the full day of data literacy) to practice the protocol for gathering evidence of student learning. In 2015-2016, 81% of elementary schools attended Pedagogical Documentation sessions.

### Reflective summaries of School Learning Plans

All schools in the OCDSB develop a School Learning Plan that uses the following professional learning cycle to improve student achievement and well-being:



**Figure 1. Professional Learning Cycle for School Learning Plans and Board Improvement Plan.**

In the spring of 2016, school teams wrote reflections on their School Learning Plans, sharing their insight on what they learned throughout the cycle.

Across the District, common strengths were:

- Collaboration and educator learning;
- Use of data including student work; and
- Student outcomes/learning and use of instructional strategies.

Common opportunities for growth identified were:

- Use data to determine need and monitor learning or marker students;
- Engage more staff and parents;
- Implement instructional strategies; and
- Increase precision and intentionality.

Teams also reflected on impact and commonly identified improvements in:

- Student learning:
  - Increase in achievement (quality of work, levels);
  - Use of precise vocabulary and more likely to verbalize;
  - Risk-taking; and
  - Independent use of tools.
- Teaching practices:
  - Use of student work;
  - Monitoring marker students;
  - Use of multiple sources of data;
  - Greater use of feedback;
  - Open-ended tasks; and
  - Cross-curricular approach.
- Structures:
  - Organization of the learning environment; and
  - Learning support structure.

#### Professional development for staff

Professional development sessions are held for staff learning, with the ultimate goal being to impact student learning. In 2015-2016, these sessions focused on a variety of topics, such as: assessment and evaluation; literacy (with a particular focus on applied English); and mathematics (with a focus on transitioning the math learner across panels).

One area of focus for professional development in 2015-2016 was the Early Years. Sessions aimed to: provide an introduction to inquiry-based learning and key components of an effective kindergarten program for teachers new to Kindergarten (approximately 100 educators attended); provide an opportunity for kindergarten teams (teacher and early childhood educator) to build on their learning and understanding of kindergarten programming using the Quality Programming in the Early Years Educator's Guide (approximately 850 educators attended); and to provide an opportunity for Kindergarten educators to learn about the use of technology as an important part of pedagogical documentation (approximately 400 educators attended).

### Provincial assessment data (EQAO)

EQAO assessment data (as presented in detail in Appendix A) provides evidence of trends over time as well as comparisons to provincial results. OCDSB students outperformed their provincial counterparts on seven of the ten EQAO assessments (performance was the same for grade 9 academic and applied math, and OCDSB scores were lower for grade 3 math). These results highlight the OCDSB's continued success on EQAO with the tendency to achieve greater success than that achieved provincially. It also highlights the need for continued efforts in mathematics.

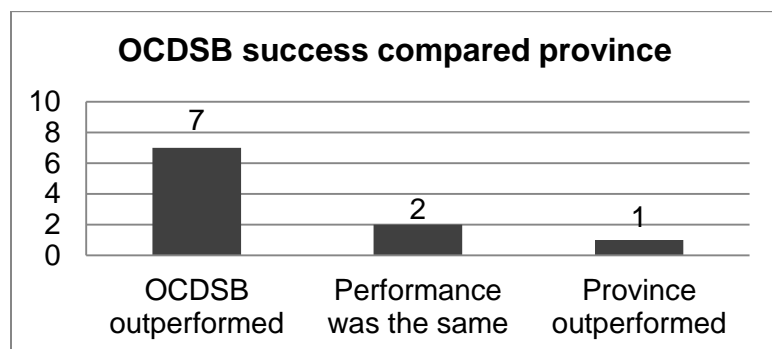


Figure 2. OCDSB success on EQAO assessments compared to the province.

Compared to the previous year's data<sup>1</sup>, rates of success in meeting the provincial standard on EQAO assessments increased in four areas – all of which are related to literacy (grade 3 and 6 reading, grade 6 writing, and previously eligible OSSLT<sup>2</sup>). Performance stayed the same for grade 9 academic and applied math and decreased for grade 3 writing and math, grade 6 math, and first-time eligible OSSLT. Once again, these trends suggest that math tends to be an area of need.

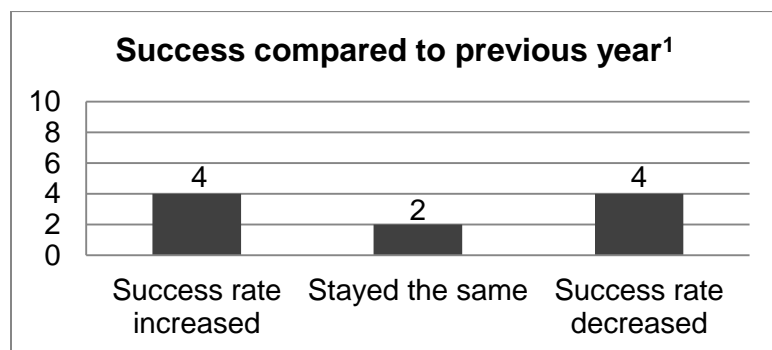
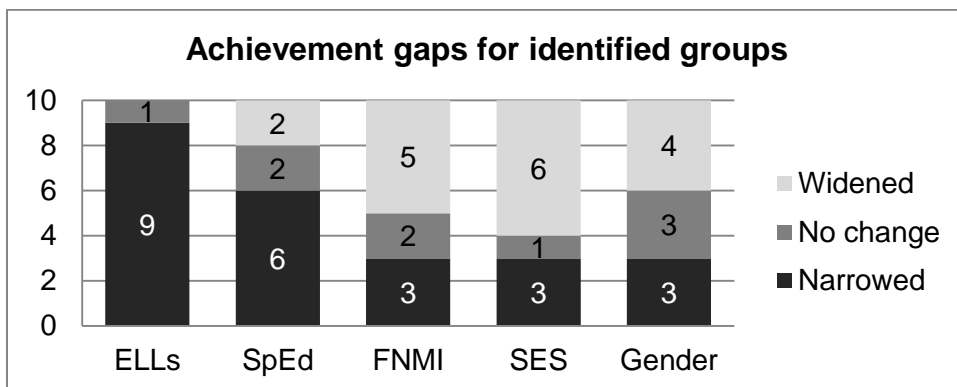


Figure 3. OCDSB success on EQAO compared to the previous year's data.

EQAO data also provides evidence of progress in reducing the achievement gaps between all students and identified groups of students. The trends observed based on 2015-2016 assessments, compared to the average across the last three years of data, are presented in the graph below.

<sup>1</sup> Note that for most assessments the previous year with data is 2013-2014. Data for 2014-2015 is only available for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.



**Figure 4. Number of assessments for which achievement gaps narrowed, stayed the same, or widened for identified groups (EQAO).**

*Note.* Groups represented in the graph above are: English language learners (ELLs); students with special education needs (SpEd); students who have self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI); students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (SES); and males vs. females (Gender).

*Note.* The achievement gap for gender is typically the result of females outperforming males (with the exception of grade 9 math, for which males outperformed females).

*Note.* For FNMI, grade 9 applied math showed no change in the absolute value of the gap, but the gap shifted such that FNMI students are now outperforming (as opposed to underperforming) compared to all students.

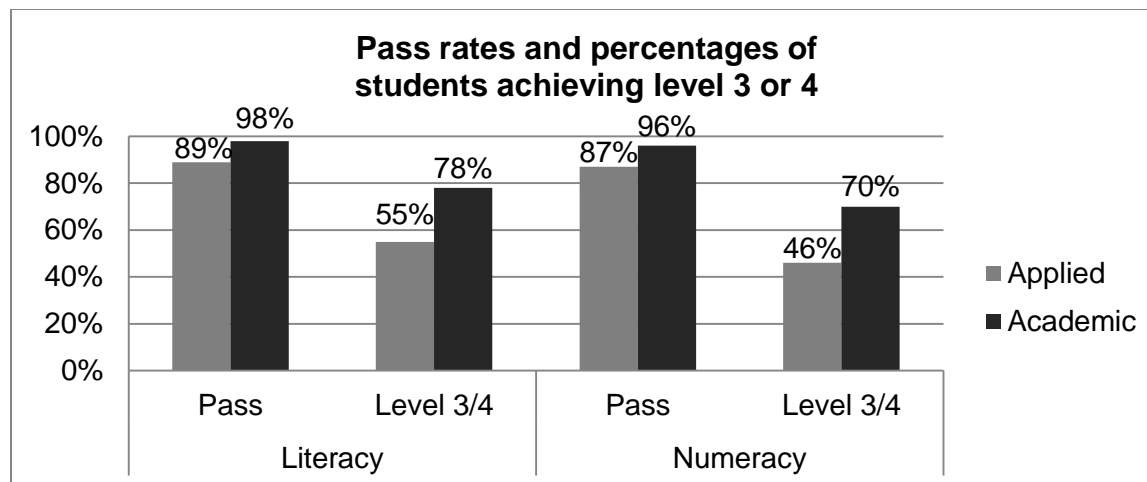
The trends presented are based on groups which represent subsets of the population, and with smaller groups there are greater fluctuations over time. As such, trends should be interpreted with caution and in conjunction with other data. Based on the EQAO data, there is evidence of progress for ELLs and students with special education needs and evidence that future work is needed to support students who have self-identified as FNMI and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods. Interestingly, students who have self-identified as FNMI and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods have been the newest areas of focus for establishing data collection practices.

### Report card data

Report card data (as presented in detail in Appendix A) provides valuable insight on trends in student achievement. Overall OCDSB students are highly successful, with pass rates staying the same or increasing for 19 of the 22 compulsory courses for grades 9 and 10 (English, Core French, Geography, History, Math, Science, Civics, and Careers). Furthermore, the proportion of students meeting/exceeding the provincial standard for these courses has remained the same or increased for 18 of the 22 courses.

One clear trend in the report card data is the substantial difference in performance of students in applied versus academic courses, as presented in Figure 6. On average, in 2015-2016, students in applied literacy courses were 23% less likely to achieve a level 3 or 4 than their peers enrolled in academic courses. Similarly, students in applied math/science courses were 24% less likely to achieve a level 3 or 4 than their peers in

academic courses. Although less striking, these trends were also present for pass rates – with rates 9% lower in applied courses in both areas. This discrepancy between applied and academic courses has been evident over the years, and requires intentional work in this area to improve the performance of learners in applied courses.



**Figure 5. Average pass rates and percentages of students achieving level 3 or 4 across grades 9 and 10 compulsory credits (based on 2015-2016 report card data).**

#### Cohort graduation rate and annual certification rate

The OCDSB cohort graduation rate for 2015-2016 (i.e., students entering grade 9 for the first time in 2010-2011) was 87%, which is slightly higher than the provincial rate of 86%. In 2015-2016, the Annual Certification Rate, which reflects the proportion of students who have earned an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), Ontario Secondary School Certification (OSSC), or a Certificate of Accomplishment (COA) in what is theoretically their final year of school, indicates an 89% success rate which represents an increase of 1% from the previous two years. These increases continue to move the OCDSB toward the target of a 90% graduation rate by, or in advance of, 2020.

#### Grade 12 French Proficiency: Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELFP)

The DELFP is an assessment designed to measure French proficiency outcomes across four competencies – speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Since 2013-2014, there has been an increase in the number of students participating in the assessment, with a small drop last year for a participation rate of 70%. Success rates for the past three years have been above 90%, with 92.7% of participating students being successful last year. It is worth noting that a labour disruption at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year resulted in unforeseen changes to the administration of the DELFP, which may have impacted both participation and success rates. Overall, success on the DELFP is quite high and is representative of a large population of the student body, evidencing progress in student learning of the French language.

#### Next Steps

It is intriguing that 'using data' was identified as both a strength and a weakness in the reflections on school learning plans. Although using data is a strategy which has

improved greatly in recent years, there are still improvements to be made. This year, a significant focus for principal training is to support the use of data. The purpose of this report, and the data presented in Appendix A, is to provide insight into the trends in learning based on multiple sources of data. This report presents data so that it can be used to inform practice and make additional progress on the learning objective. Based on this work, key areas of focus for future work should include support for: mathematics, students in applied courses, students who have self-identified as FNMI, and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods.

### **Guiding Questions**

The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:

- How does the data presented capture our progress on learning as a strategic objective?
- How do the trends inform our work?
- How does the data influence our thinking about priorities in the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being?
- What targets can we set as we strive for future improvements?
- How does the work on learning align with work for making progress on the other strategies priorities?

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