

# Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School

## TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Student population: 1060; Grades: 9–12; Principal: Peter Aguiar

Over half of the students at Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School are English language learners. Many are new Canadians, arriving throughout the year and speaking a variety of languages. Although the school community faces many economic challenges, the student population continues to grow.

Student data is made accessible to Vanier through the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Data Information Platform (DIP). The DIP contains EQAO scores, cohort information, Canadian Achievement Test and Ontario Comprehension Assessment (OCA) results, running records and report cards.

The OCA is a board initiative that starts testing in Grades 7 and 8. The same students take the OCA in Grade 9, in both semesters. Teachers use moderated marking and review cohort information from Grades 7 through 9 to plan strategies for effective teaching. The tests can be modified for use as worksheets. Teachers infuse a common model for skill-based instruction with their own knowledge of subject areas.

Principal Peter Aguiar says: "The OCA and OSSLT materials are about teaching literacy. They bring everyone together with a common focus. That focus is not about teaching to the test: it is about teaching the skills. The EQAO assessments reflect skills that these students will need to be effective lifelong learners. These skills are important, and the test is designed to assess them. Literacy is not taught in isolation, but embedded across the curriculum."

The literacy teacher shares EQAO's cohort-tracking information and Item Information Report (IIR) with teachers, providing student profiles along with strategies for improvement from *Think Literacy*.

Literacy lead and teacher-librarian Ann Ferrigan says: "The IIR is very helpful for students that are not successful. It shows teachers where the needs are and provides them with a differentiated-instruction model from the success modules, which are amazing. Teachers get input on their own students. It's a really good sharing process and it's effective. We don't just share data to identify problems, we also share data to celebrate success."

Literacy is a cross-curricular effort. The staff sets up SMART goals and works through Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways.



Bianca Auciello (vice-principal), Peter Aguiar (principal), Ann Ferrigan

Posters align language and methods. Teachers realize that reading diagrams is as much a skill in English as it is in geography and science.

All Grade 10 students do literacy activities with expectations, exemplars and rubrics taken from the EQAO Web site. An after-school literacy program is open to all, and students not reaching Level 3 are encouraged to attend.

Teachers understand the importance of Grades 9 and 10 credit accumulation. Ongoing interaction with feeder schools facilitates counselling and proper placement of Grade 8s. Purposeful timetabling allows students to change pathways if necessary. The DIP data helps identify students needing extra support.

Vanier runs a summer program with courses covering literacy, numeracy, technology and the arts. Originally open to help at-risk students, the credit program now attracts over half of the incoming Grade 9s.

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Communication with parents can often be a challenge, but Vanier’s multicultural staff is proactive about bridging language barriers. As well as multi-language curriculum nights, parents get voicemail messages, direct mailings and notices on the interactive school Web site.

The student success team meets regularly to plan support for students. A message goes home with all students early, to highlight any social or academic concerns. This invites a conversation to take place before the first report card is issued. The 21% of students requiring special education accommodations are encouraged to advocate for themselves with their teachers for continual support. Every student who needs a scribe is matched with someone he or she knows on staff. Teachers connect with the student before the assessment so there are no surprises.

Principal Aguiar says: “Students receive the accommodations they need on a regular basis, not just on the day of the test.

This is what they need to be successful all the time. The first time they receive an accommodation should not be on the day of the assessment.”

English language learners are offered support with language development across the curriculum. Teachers nominate students and explain the accommodations in such a positive way that students are comfortable asking for help. Some high-achieving students also participate, hoping to improve their grades.

Jean Vanier staff and students have a strong sense of pride in their multicultural population. They celebrate their “many roots and many voices.” With the use of data helping the school deliver the curriculum effectively, they can also take pride in doing well.

Principal Aguiar says: “Let the data speak to you and show where your needs are. Look specifically at what you can do to address those needs. Success comes when you use the

data to inform what you are going to do with each student. We do things in a way that reflects our multiculturalism. I am most proud of my teachers’ willingness to get involved. A more complete educational experience will always result in better achievement.”



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**OSSLT STUDENT POPULATION**  
(eligible to write the test for the 1st time)

<b>55%</b>	Male
<b>45%</b>	Female
<b>29%</b>	Applied
<b>59%</b>	Academic
<b>4%</b>	Locally developed
<b>2%</b>	Other
<b>16%</b>	Special education needs
<b>27%</b>	English language learners
<b>16%</b>	Speak primarily a language other than English at home*

\* Based on responses to Student Questionnaire