

## St. James Catholic School

### SUDBURY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Student population: 382; Grades: JK–8; Principal: Lucie Cullen

In Lively, now part of the City of Greater Sudbury, St. James Catholic School serves 382 students from kindergarten to Grade 8 and offers a French Immersion program beginning in junior kindergarten. The majority of the students are bused, with some spending up to 50 minutes to and from school. The local community consists mainly of English-speaking families. Approximately 25% of the student population is drawn from the Ojibwa Whitefish Lake First Nation. Students with special education needs comprise approximately 30% of the population.

St. James has established an effective working relationship with the Whitefish Lake First Nation, which funds an education officer, who acts as a liaison with the school to support student learning. Aboriginal students are offered the option of taking a Native language course in Ojibwa rather than core French. The school's Native language teacher visits the Whitefish Lake First Nation regularly to teach the parents what he is teaching the students at the school. As a result of this ongoing interaction between the band and the school, parents from Whitefish Lake First Nation now participate more often at the school and on the school council.

Board-wide, principals use data from various sources to direct their school improvement plans. St. James principal Lucie Cullen believes that “the information received from EQAO is gold.” When the school receives its Detailed School Results and other reports early in the school year, the principal examines them in detail, highlighting key areas for teachers, and begins to plan the direction the school will take. Looking at their EQAO results over time in conjunction with data from various sources, the school team pinpoints areas that require more work and develops its school improvement plan. Many of the strategies the team uses were introduced through professional development facilitated by the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership 3 (OFIP 3) program, an experience that enhanced the ability of educators to dig deeper into the data and flag areas on which to focus.

---

**“The key to ongoing school success has been the consistency of staff and the development of common anchor charts, assessments and teaching strategies, and a consistent language throughout all grades.”**

—Lucie Cullen, principal

---



Laurie Peterson; Lucie Cullen, principal; Tammy Lanci

The staff also examines data from classroom assessments, board-level mid-year assessments, DRA, CASI, running records and report cards to set goals for the school improvement plan. All data are tracked and displayed visually so information on every student's progress is always available at a glance. All students performing at Level 2 are highlighted and monitored throughout the year, and they are offered an optional after-school homework club. Students at Level 1 receive interventions from the special-education teacher. The assessment data tracked by teachers and provided to the board's data warehouse several times throughout the year assists the school in responding to specific student learning needs on a consistent and ongoing basis.

The reading of graphic and non-continuous text was one of the areas that staff determined needed intervention, based on their examination of their classroom and EQAO data, previous EQAO assessments and *The Ontario Curriculum*. The staff engaged in a six-week Teaching-Learning Critical Pathway with a focus on posters. The literacy team called many organizations to ask for their posters and brochures for the staff and students to examine. In addition, all classrooms analyzed various other types of graphic texts students encounter regularly. Teachers shared strategies and expertise and engaged in dialogue throughout this six-week block. As a result of this focused intervention, teachers noted that students' understanding and use of graphic and non-continuous text improved.

Non-fiction reading was another area of concern, identified through the team's analysis of the EQAO Item Information Reports and students' reading responses in class. The majority of students choose fiction as reading material. As a consequence, their responses to non-fiction selections needed special attention. Working collaboratively, the staff developed anchor charts and exemplars using common language so students would know and understand the expectations throughout their time at St. James. Teacher moderation sessions were planned, and teachers created rubrics and common assessments.

St. James also accessed the board's Tutor in the Classroom program initiative, in which university students are hired to assist in classrooms as determined by the principal and an in-school team. At St. James, the tutor came every morning to work with the Grade 3 students. Assessments were administered at the beginning and end of the initiative to measure its success. Running records were completed monthly as another means of gauging the students' progress.

According to Principal Cullen, "the most important and informative professional development staff was involved in was visiting other schools with similar demographics and size." Funds were made available to facilitate such visits, which allowed teachers to interact both in the classroom and in sessions for sharing strategies, skills and expertise. Through visits to two "schools on the move," St. James staff came to appreciate the value of anchor charts and teachers speaking the same language in every classroom. "The key to ongoing school success has been the consistency of staff and the development of common anchor charts, assessments and teaching strategies, and a consistent language throughout all grades," says Principal Cullen.



St. James Catholic School

Literacy is a priority throughout St. James. Principal Cullen runs a weekly Literacy Lunch, to which everyone is invited. Discussions centre on strategies teachers are using in their classrooms and progress being made by the students. Attendees often have the opportunity to view a webcast, which they then discuss. At school council meetings, the principal has also used webcasts focusing on strategies parents can use at home. Parents have been enthusiastic and have requested more sessions. With the support of the council, all fundraising activities target literacy resources for the school's book room and classroom libraries.

**GRADES 3 AND 6 STUDENT POPULATION**

	GRADE 3	GRADE 6
Female	48%	31%
Male	52%	69%
English language learners	0%	0%
Special education needs	16%	21%
Born outside Canada	0%	0%
First language learned at home other than English	0%	0%

**“The bond between the school staff, students and parents creates a sense of family at St. James Catholic School. The involvement of the parents in the school council and [their] support of initiatives have helped move the students forward and have contributed to the ongoing success of the school, [which has seen] a steady improvement in reading, writing and mathematics.”**

—Lucie Cullen