EQAO BULLETIN

Education Quality and Accountability Office

ENSURING QUALITY ASSESSMENTS

BUILDING ON STRENGTHS; REFINING THE PROGRAM

"We believe that EQAO has created world-class educational assessment programs. Our analysis and critique is aimed at identifying the strengths of the assessments and pointing out areas where clarification of purposes and constructs, improvement of systems and methodologies, and incorporation of new analysis and reporting technology could enhance EQAO's work, which has become a vital part of Ontario education."

– from the *Final Report of the External Evaluation of EQAO's Assessment Processes* by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Comprehensive Review

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) continually reviews and updates its assessment practices. In November 2002, EQAO's Board of Directors launched Ensuring Quality Assessments, a thorough review of all aspects of EQAO's assessment processes and practices. The objectives were to ensure that current international standards are met, that exemplary practices in large-scale assessment are matched and that EQAO reporting practices meet user needs for accountability, improvement planning and staff development.

The Review Process

As part of the Ensuring Quality Assessments review, EQAO conducted extensive research on best practices by studying the processes and procedures used by noteworthy testing organizations and jurisdictions worldwide. In addition, an external review of EQAO's assessment processes was conducted by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, who worked with a team of internationally recognized large-scale assessment experts. This expert review resulted in a June 2004 report that affirmed aspects of the current EQAO assessment program and provided recommendations to refine current practices.

EQAO also undertook consultations within the education community, including dialogue forums with EQAO's Assessment Advisory Committee and with more than 20 groups representing directors, supervisory officers, principals, teachers, board contacts, trustees, parents and students. The consultations yielded information and insights about the assessments and their administration, the value and usefulness of EQAO data reports for accountability and improvement planning, and the impact of the assessments on staff development.

Using the recommendations from the review, EQAO is implementing refinements to the assessment program to provide a clearer, more helpful and less burdensome accountability framework. The changes are aimed at improving assessment designs to ensure they meet the highest international psychometric standards for large-scale testing while reducing the time and administrative workload for teachers, schools and school boards.

Honouring a Strong Foundation

As EQAO refines its assessment design and processes, it will honour the strong foundations laid for the agency in its initial years by continuing to

- involve teachers in all stages of the assessment cycle;
- work closely with the Assessment Advisory Committee, school boards and the government;
- design curriculum-based assessments that measure student achievement of Ontario's curriculum expectations;
- report at the individual student, school, school board and provincial levels using the provincial levels of achievement (1 through 4);
- provide achievement information that can be compared year to year and
- retain the performance-based nature of the assessments by including open-response as well as multiple-choice items so that students have a variety of ways to demonstrate what they know and can do.

"EQAO…is implementing refinements to provide a clearer, more helpful and less burdensome accountability framework."

–from EQAO's *Ensuring Quality Assessments: Enhancements to EQAO's Assessment Program*

Enhancements to the Assessment Program to Be Implemented Beginning in the 2004–2005 School Year:

Enhancements to Assessment Designs	Enhancements to Reporting
• Update the framework for each assessment to clearly identify its purpose and its links to *The Ontario Curriculum* and to allow for specific feedback on student performance. • Devise test designs that require less time to administer. • Reduce total testing time for Grade 3 and Grade 6 students to six hours. • Reduce total testing time for the Grade 9 assessment to two hours. • In 2005, reduce total testing time for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test to $2^1/_2$ hours on a single day.	• Continue to report levels of proficiency from 1 to 4, with added scale scores showing students' degrees of mastery within each level (e.g., whether a student in Level 2 is closer to Level 1 or Level 3). • Shorten the time between the administration of an assessment and the reporting of results. • Provide timely, ready-to-use reports so that teachers, schools and school boards can > demonstrate accountability, > enhance educational programs and curriculum delivery and > improve student achievement.
Enhancements to Assessment Practices	**Maintaining the Leading Edge**
• Administer the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments later in the school year, allowing more of the curriculum to be taught before the test period. • Extend teacher involvement in developing, reviewing, administering and scoring Ontario-based assessments. • Have teachers assist in activities such as item review, item selection for assessments, the creation and validation of scoring guides, as well as the review of validity, reliability and training papers.	• Convene a panel of measurement experts to meet quarterly to advise EQAO on psychometric methodologies and practices. • Convene a peer review panel, composed of a minimum of three international experts, to complete the next cycle of review by 2009. This peer review process will ensure > timely changes, reflecting new developments in large-scale assessment; > continuous improvement and > enhancements to EQAO assessment designs, administrative procedures and reporting to meet the changing requirements of stakeholders and policy-makers.

"Learning from data is central to our overarching responsibility as educators–being accountable for the success of each and every student."

– Marguerite Jackson, CEO, Education Quality and Accountability Office

Further details of the review process and subsequent refinements to the assessment program are available on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com.