



CELEBRATING SUCCESS: OSSLT SCORES RISE AT AHSS

Almaguin Highlands Secondary School whose OSSLT scores rose 10% in 2018/19

A COMPREHENSIVE WHOLE SCHOOL LITERACY STRATEGY FOR ALL STUDENTS AND STAFF.

Almaguin Highlands Secondary Schools Whole School Approach

The focus at AHSS begins in Grade 9 with diagnostics to target areas of student need. Reading assessments in semester 1 lead to reading groups in semester 2 where needs appropriate supports are provided. Students gain literacy skills in English classes and through cross curricular lessons in elective classes. Grade 9 students engage in completion of a fully accommodated mock test in Grade 9 Geography classes. Students are familiarized with the test format and cognitive overload and anxiety are avoided on mock test day through growth mindset activities that promote a “can do” attitude.

Students are diagnosed again in Grade 10 to assess progress and continued need for support in target areas. Students are identified for levelled support: green students and second time writers receive regular skill development during focus periods, yellow receive hot spot classes during their Civics classes, red receive individualized support. Students prepare for the test through activities that include guest

speakers, literacy carousels and parent support documents sent home with report cards. Intervention strategies for grade 9 and 10 students include Special Education Supports through explicit teaching of supportive strategies and use of technology, student enrolment on the Lit/Num Register for individualized after school support. All students have access to third teacher supports that promote easy to understand methods of writing task completion in all classes. School wide, students engage in a common Series of Opinion Paragraphs activity. The school shares a word of the week and celebrate students who are “caught reading” outside of class.

The staff are involved in review of 5-year historical triangulated data including Teacher feedback from mock tests,

Student feedback, Grade 3 & 6 data, IEP and psych ed data to examine trends and recurring student need. Staff engage in PD to help support their students in essential literacy tasks and skills and have engaged in team teaching with the literacy instructional lead to hone practice. The board wide secondary strategy “We are All Literacy Teachers” (WALT) is reviewed and refined at each staff meeting to ensure the continuation of the three-pronged approach; whole school, disciplinary and intervention strategies are being practiced in a balanced and appropriate manner.



LEARNING THROUGH TEACHING IN THE ONTARIO LITERACY COURSE

Almaguin Highlands Approach to the Literacy Course

A large part of the OLC curriculum asks the students to reflect on themselves as a learner and what their struggles are when it comes to learning, reading and writing. For their culminating assignment I try to help remind them of their journey as a learner by having them create a literacy activity that would be suitable for a grade 1-3 student, along with preparing specific children's books for them to read to a student and some suitable reading comprehension questions to go with it.

While making the literacy activities and talking about reading strategies throughout the week there were many self discovery moments and recognition of things like: "That's why they were clapping at me!", "That's why we sang all those rhyming songs!", "Those are vowels?". However some of the more powerful moments for me were when students acknowledge they didn't play literacy games with their parents, or when they asked to take the game home to play with a younger sibling. Those to me were the true moments of understanding how important early literacy skills are and the hope that they will try with their own children to read more and play literacy games with them.

I was fortunate enough to get the support from my principal (Mrs. Fawcett) and the principal at Sundridge Elementary (Mr. Krause) to coordinate with classroom teachers at Sundridge Elementary (Mrs. Johnstone and Mrs. Whitehead), and bring the games and books into their classrooms.



This opportunity to have my students implement their games and work with real students who are just starting to read and write was incredible to watch. They took the lesson and learning seriously knowing they were going to be working with a real live student. The culminating activity could have still happened without visiting the classrooms, however it wouldn't have been as rich and positive experience for these students. The students were scared and concerned at the beginning, but by the end of the experience they were thrilled and I hope will remember the lessons for years to come.

Kate Shields Teacher AHSS