

# St. Joseph's Catholic High School

## WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Student population: 1037; Grades: 9–12; Principal: Tish Hedderson

St. Joseph's Catholic High School in Windsor serves 1037 students in Grades 9–12. It is a dual stream school offering French Immersion. Fifty-two different countries are represented in the diverse student population, and each country's flag stands proudly in the foyer. Many students (22–26%) speak a language other than English at home, and 27–32% do not have English as a first language. Among the entire school population, as many as 36% of students are taking courses at the applied level.

The administrators and staff analyze EQAO literacy results, focusing on attitudinal and contextual information in addition to achievement trends. The OSSLT data indicate consistent improvement over time and that the school's efforts have been rewarded, as its success rate surpasses those of the board and province.

Groups of teachers meet early in the fall and use EQAO's "6 Questions to Ask When Looking at Your School's Results" as discussion prompts. They review OSSLT data in order to formulate goals for the school improvement plan. Close examination of the data revealed a significant deficiency in boys' literacy results. The literacy team, with the support of administration, developed a program with a soccer theme. Incorporating high-interest resources and teaching specific strategies allowed teachers to maintain student engagement while working to close the gender gap. This initiative, which received funding from the Ministry, proved successful and the resources purchased continue to be effective in Grade 10 applied classes.

Professional learning community meetings considered EQAO data along with the information in the board's data warehouse. One area of need identified was making inferences. The team developed a school-wide approach to address this area and to focus on the explicit teaching of effective literacy strategies. The approach was



Daniela Koppeser, Tish Hedderson (principal)

multi-faceted and included strategies such as "I Think, I Read, Therefore" from the Ministry's *Think Literacy*. Students used the same graphic organizers throughout the grades and subject areas to guide them in finding the main idea and supporting ideas in various texts. A Grade 12 student interviewed indicated that using graphic organizers this way helped students organize their thinking. She has continued to apply the skills she developed solving the inference challenges in her life outside school and during her preparation for university. She states: "Teachers had high expectations and [told us] that effort would always be necessary to succeed. They also made sure that we had what we needed to be able to do well."

Students are presented with a different inference challenge every week during morning announcements. These critical and creative thinking challenges consist of three related words for which students have to determine and articulate the connection.

---

**"We continue to have more and richer conversations about literacy because of the data. Data has been the springboard to our decision making—our decisions for student achievement are grounded in relevant data."**

**Tish Hedderson, Principal**

**“The results of this school-wide goal have been very rewarding. Students have demonstrated increased skills at solving problems that involve thinking outside the box, and we continue to see a steady improvement.”**

**Tish Hedderson**

Answers are submitted to determine the weekly winners, and points are tallied for the entire year. Parents support this challenge financially by providing a pizza party for the winning class at the end of each semester. The challenge has resulted in strong student engagement. “The results of this school-wide goal have been very rewarding. Students have demonstrated increased skills at solving problems that involve thinking outside the box, and we continue to see a steady improvement,” indicates Principal Tish Hedderson.

There is a strong focus on literacy skills for all students from the time they enter the school. Teachers regularly use questions that encourage higher-level thinking and use EQAO stems as models in their class. Strengths and needs are assessed, and teachers work to continue to provide the support needed to improve student learning. Students are guided through the literacy activities in all content areas and provided with many opportunities to practise their skills. Teachers then provide timely feedback so that students are aware of their achievement and next steps.

At St. Joseph's Catholic High School, data clearly play an important role in determining the focus for student achievement. Everyone is challenged to think critically about literacy strategies and how to best meet student learning needs. There is much emphasis on embedding literacy and differentiated instruction in all subject areas. The literacy support teacher states: “We have found it important to put a face to the data. This helps us make informed decisions and work to improve the achievement of students in our school.” Improving student achievement over time is very important to all members of this school community. Principal Hedderson states: “We continue to have more and richer conversations about literacy because of the data. Data has been the springboard to our decision making—our decisions for student achievement are grounded in relevant data.”

**OSSLT STUDENT POPULATION**

(eligible to write the test for the 1st time)

<b>48%</b>	Female
<b>52%</b>	Male
<b>28%</b>	Applied
<b>66%</b>	Academic
<b>4%</b>	Locally developed
<b>1%</b>	Other
<b>21%</b>	Special education needs
<b>2%</b>	English language learners
<b>27%</b>	Speak primarily a language other than English at home*

\*Based on responses to Student Questionnaire



St. Joseph's Catholic High School