

Maryborough Public School

UPPER GRAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Student population: 170; Grades: JK–6; Principal: Jonathan Walker

Situated in the village of Moorefield, Maryborough Public School serves 170 students from junior kindergarten to Grade 6, with 97% bused. The demographics of this rural school remain stable, as the majority of students who enrol in kindergarten stay until the end of Grade 6. Staff and parents set high expectations for students and themselves, creating a very positive culture here.

Maryborough is an integral part of this farming community, and many organizations are involved in school activities and projects. The school is very welcoming, and parents and community members willingly volunteer their time and expertise, often continuing to volunteer after their own children have left the school. Teachers integrate activities into their classrooms that are modelled on events taking place in the community; this enhances the learning experience for students. For example, a skateboarding park was planned for the neighbourhood, and teachers used this project as a classroom assignment. Students were asked to design a plan for the park and write to the committee to provide their input. The planner visited the class, reviewed the designs and took input from the students.

When EQAO results are released in the fall, the school team reviews the over-time data to determine areas of strength and of concern. They use EQAO data as a framework to gauge their success in meeting goals set the previous year. They believe that the test reflects the *Ontario Curriculum* expectations and that the results determine next steps. Classroom teachers meet to examine the EQAO data as well as school and board data, such as report cards, PM Benchmarks and CASI, to design their school improvement plan. Looking at the mathematics open-response questions, teachers noticed that student responses were weak and decided that three-part problem-solving would be a focus in the school improvement plan. Using the Item Information Reports

GRADES 3 AND 6 STUDENT POPULATION

	GRADE 3	GRADE 6
Female	57%	71%
Male	43%	29%
Special education needs	33%	33%
English language learners	0%	0%
Born outside Canada	0%	0%
First language learned at home was other than English	0%	0%

for mathematics, staff could see exactly where each student scored and worked to develop strategies to move those students to the next level. Principal Jonathan Walker believes that examining each student’s responses to the questions makes the EQAO data more meaningful to the staff. He explains: “We use the EQAO data to help us make informed decisions



Jonathan Walker (principal), Lori Albrecht, Jennifer Merret, Suzanne Morrison

about our next steps. We always make the numbers relevant and real by relating them to each student.”

All staff members believe that early intervention is the key to success for students; accordingly, staff administers a battery of diagnostic tests early in September. Students requiring immediate assistance and support are flagged, and accommodations are made where necessary. Progress is closely monitored through regular team meetings and if, after different strategies are attempted, they have not made any significant progress, an individual education plan is developed. The staff regularly celebrates the successes of students who have struggled and now succeed.

One strategy that has proved very successful is the Reading Tutoring Program. Using funding through the board, the school hired a teacher to work with Level 2 students to improve their reading skills. This teacher works with individual students or small groups depending on needs. With the assistance of a board literacy coach, the primary division initiated Daily Five and CAFE (Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency and Extended vocabulary). Daily Five involves placing students in five reading rotations of 20 minutes each. During this time, teachers meet with their guided reading groups and conference with students to set goals. CAFE lessons are taught between the rotations. As a result of this strategy, teachers observe that students can reflect on their work and self-identify what skills they need to improve upon. Accountable talk takes place among the students, and their teachers notice that they can better articulate their skills and the strategies they use.

Teachers at Maryborough believe technology is very important to the success of their students, with a focus on using it wisely as a tool. Every classroom has a Smart Board, and teachers

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Jonathan Walker, Principal

and students regularly access technology. The school has many computer programs to support students with special education needs (Kesi, Dragon, Word Q, Inspiration, Smart Ideas, Raz Kids, Tumblebooks), and the students know and can use these computer programs wherever possible to assist them in completing their assignments.

Maryborough recently purchased iPads for the school, and a local company involved junior-division teachers and students in the design of iPad carrying cases. Students created their own carrying case designs and invited company representatives to see them. Teachers also invite students to bring their own laptops, iPads and iPods into the classroom to use, as the school is involved in UG Cloud, a program they piloted last year through the Upper Grand District School Board and its partnership with Google, where students can e-mail any other student in the school. Students also share notes, converse with the teacher and assist each other to complete or make up missed homework

or papers, and teachers can give immediate feedback to their students while they are working on assignments. This has been a successful program, and the teachers see positive results.

Maryborough teachers focus on the whole student, not just the student’s academic progress, because they believe every student can learn. They look for ways for students to be successful.

There are many extracurricular activities and elective programs in place to motivate and engage the students, because the staff believes that if the students are involved in activities they will want to come to school. The students respond to the positive culture and their teachers’ enthusiasm and work hard to meet their expectations. “It is the strength of the community outreach and welcoming atmosphere of Maryborough Public School that has contributed to the ongoing success of our students,” states Principal Walker. “We have hard-working and committed staff members who truly care about their students and constantly ask what they can do so the students can be successful.”



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