

HHS ranks second in Muskoka for 2011 literacy results

By Kim Good

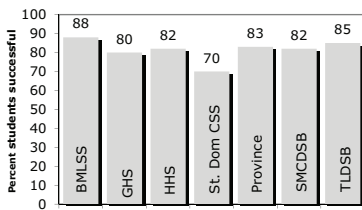
Though Huntsville High School bettered its standing in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) by one percentage point over last year to 82, it still fell below the provincial results for the second year in a row.

Again this year, only one Muskoka school managed to beat the provincial success rate. This time it was Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School, up six percentage points from last year and well in front with 88 per cent of fully participating first-time eligible students passing.

The test was administered at schools across the province on March 31 to assess the basic literacy skills of students on a pass/fail basis. The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) released the results last week.

Provincially, 83 per cent of students achieved a passing grade, while 85 per cent across Trillium Lakeland District School Board

2011 Grade 10 Literacy Results



and 82 per cent across the Simcoe-Muskoka Catholic District School Board fared as well.

The Grade 10 literacy test or equivalent course is a graduation requirement in Ontario. Though results can fluctuate year to year, especially for a small school, the

overall school success rate can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses and guide improvement.

Last year's leader in Muskoka, Gravenhurst High School, dropped six percentage points this year to 80 per cent, while St. Dom-

nic Catholic Secondary School took the bottom spot, dropping 12 points to only 70 per cent of students successfully passing the test. However, with only 75 and 56 students taking the test, respectively, compared to 220 and 221 for Huntsville High School and BMLSS, the larger year-to-year fluctuations are expected in the smaller schools.

According to the EQAO school report, for small schools, "Results may vary considerably from year to year, and differences may look exaggerated."

For example, in St. Dominic's group of 56 students, a difference of 10 per cent represents only six students. In contrast, at Huntsville High School and BMLSS, it would take 22 more students to fail before a 10 per cent drop in their literacy results would be observed.

Along with the number of students taking the test, other factors can also influence a school's results. The ratio of academic to applied students, females to males, English as a second language and

students with special education needs will also affect the results.

Gravenhurst High School is the only Muskoka-area high school with more applied than academic students, with only 35 per cent academic students attending. The other area high schools range between 61 and 71 per cent academic.

Surprisingly, Gravenhurst also bucked provincial and local trends with boys doing better than girls on the OSSLT this year. Across the province, girls did better on average by seven percentage points, with 87 per cent of girls and only 80 per cent of boys passing the test. Locally, most schools saw girls passing at a rate of five to 12 percentage points higher than the boys; however, at GHS, boys outpaced the girls, with only 78 per cent of girls passing compared to 82 per cent of boys.

For the complete 2011 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test reports on each school, including relevant background information, go to eqao.com.

Empire site to get some attention

By Alison Brownlee

One of Huntsville's most visible sites may get some sprucing up in the near future.

The site of the former Empire Hotel, which sat at the corner of Centre and Main streets, is now mainly brick chips surrounded by a plywood barrier.

Although aesthetics improvements were planned, property owner David Keay's untimely death put a temporary halt to the plans.

The unexpected passing of one of its most charitable members last month rocked the community. Keay died suddenly of a heart attack in May. He was 56.

Since then, town staff has been working with Keay's family to move forward on the beautification project.

During a May 31 public works and protective services meeting, chief building official Mike Gooch said the work would be done through the municipality's property standards by-law, which governs the appearance and condition of municipal properties.

Mayor Claude Doughty said he had a meeting scheduled with Keay that was preempted by his death.

"The discussion we were to have was about a joint effort between Dave (Keay) and the municipality to put that property in a good appearance over the coming months," said Doughty.

He said there were also discussions about a joint lease agreement that would allow the town to use some of the property for parking.

"In exchange for that, we could do some of the maintenance on the site," said Doughty.

He said he had met with Keay's family and discussed how the town could move forward with the project.

"It was certainly Dave's desire, as it is ours, to get that property cleaned up for the coming summer," said Doughty. "On a very friendly basis, we would go through the property standards method, which enables us to go on the site and do the work without sign off by the owner of the property."

During a June 20 council meeting, Doughty revisited the issue, saying the intention is to plant flowers or shrubs and possibility create some parking on the lot before the end of the summer.

House arrest for stabbing

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and below the heart.

Trivett said the wounds resulted in "profuse bleeding" and the victim had to be airlifted to St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto for emergency surgery. Although the victim survived, Trivett said he still has trouble breathing properly and has a pronounced scar across his throat.

"Only medical intervention saved his life," said Trivett.

The OPP received a call regarding the victim, and almost immediately received a second call from Orr admitting to what he had done.

He was arrested without incident at his home and provided police with the knife, court heard.

Defence lawyer Peter Ward said Orr spent three days in jail following the assault and has been under "quite strict terms" ever since. Terms included restricting him to his residence between the hours of 6 p.m. and 10 a.m.

"He's had a very, very difficult time since being charged," said Ward.

"He suffers from anxiety and depression. He hasn't slept in two days."

Ward said the stabbing was not premeditated and Orr had no idea that the victim was going to be at the residence. Ward said the knife was used purely for self-defence to end the assault.

Orr is also worried that the victim's brother may seek revenge for the stabbing, Ward added.

He said Orr should serve between 12 and 15 months of house arrest.

Trivett said the nature of the injuries warrants jail time of at least nine months. "The injury certainly doesn't wag the dog, but the significance of it does make the charge more aggravating," she said. "He hit him in three especially vulnerable areas."

Trivett also pointed out that the house where the stabbing took place was a known "drug house."

"These are not lily white circumstances," she said. "He went into a known drug residence with a knife in his pocket."

Orr, a slight man dressed in a green suit, did not address the judge, but looked back several times at his family who was in the body of the court.

Judge Beatty said he was still hopeful that Orr, who had no prior criminal record, could be rehabilitated.

Beatty said the victim had initiated the fight, and was ultimately convicted of assault in the matter. The stabbing victim was given a suspended sentence and probation in that instance.

Beatty said Orr had done a good job following court orders thus far and he was confident that he could abide under house arrest for the next 18 months. During that time Orr will be allowed to leave the house only under certain circumstances, such as for medical appointments, work or for three hours each Saturday to get the necessities of life.



FOR THE CAUSE: The Remarkhambles (left to right, Sandra O'Dell, Andrea Bigelow, Dezaree Earl and Janet Markham) were one of the many teams at the Deerhurst Highlands Golf Course on Friday for the annual Golf Fore the Girls fundraiser. More than \$19,000 was raised at the event and that money will go toward the purchase of a mammoth at the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital.

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