

## *Building Roads for Students' Success*

### Reflection Sheet: What we learned about learning skills

#### Key Points

- There has been debate about the relationship of learning skills and academic achievement.
- At the elementary level “work habits” was the strongest student level predictor.
- At the intermediate level, marks increased significantly for each level of increase in learning skills
- At the secondary level, learning skills are highly correlated with achievement skills but not predictive of EQAO scores.
- Further investigation is required to better understand the predictive nature of learning skills and academic achievement.

#### Overview:

The Ontario Curriculum (Grades, 1 to 8, Grades 9 to 12) focus on “two distinct but related aspects of student achievement: the achievement of curriculum expectations and the development of learning skills” (*Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9–12, page 15*). Though a separate section on the provincial report card exists for demonstrating skills required for effective learning, there has long been debate about the relationship of learning skills and academic achievement.\*

At the elementary and intermediate levels the learning skills evaluated are: Independent Work, Initiative, Homework Completion, Use of Information, Cooperation with Others, Conflict Resolution, Class Participation, Problem Solving, and Goal-setting to improve work.



At the secondary, the learning skills evaluated are: Works Independently, Teamwork, Organization, Work Habits, and Initiative.

***Building Roads for Students' Success*** examined the predictive relationship between learning skills and student achievement. Separate analysis were completed for elementary (K-6), Intermediate (7-9) and Secondary (9-12). Overall, learning skills were found to be predictive at the elementary and intermediate levels, and mixed results were found at the secondary level.

\*Ontario Ministry of Education (2000). *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12*. Queen's printer for Ontario, and Ontario Ministry of Education (2010). *Growing Success: Assessment Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools*. First Edition. Queen's Printer for Ontario.

## Highlights:

### *At the Elementary Level:*

- “Work habits” was the strongest student level predictor of achievement in language, math, or science and were also associated with higher EQAO scores.

### *At the Intermediate level*

- Learning skills represented two correlated items: 1) independent work homework completion, class participation and goal setting, and 2) conflict resolution and cooperation with others.
- Student’s marks increased from 6.31 (language) to 7.85% (science) for each level of increase in work habits (needs improvement, satisfactory, good, excellent).
- Surprisingly, higher scores on conflict resolution was associated with slightly lower grades, possibly because students who scored higher on this factor were also those who were more likely to have to deal with issues of conflict resolution in their school.

### *At the Secondary level:*

- Analysis demonstrated that learning skills were not predictive of EQAO marks at secondary, but are correlated with report card achievement.
- An explanation may be that teachers are giving the benefit of doubt on report card learning skills to some hard working students who struggle in EQAO assessments, while other teachers penalize learning skill marks for those students who are successful on EQAO assessments but do not work hard for class marks.

Further investigation is required to better understand the process of awarding learning skills, and how they are related to academic success. Moreover, the difference in how learning skills are provided (an overall mark for all subjects at the elementary level, compared to course based marks for each subject at secondary) warrant further research.

## Questions Raised

- How does the “Growing Success” document address learning skills? How is this the same or different than the past?
- Does the “importance” of learning skills change across the elementary, intermediate, and secondary panels?
- Are teachers assessing learning skills consistently across schools, and districts?
- Do teachers perceptions of learning skills affect the grade they assign to students?

*“We want our schools to continue to be safe and to be models of effective human relationships, where students learn about and put into practice attributes such as respect, responsibility, fairness, and empathy. We want students to develop self-discipline and the personal management skills that will make their communities, workplaces, and lives the best that they can be. Together, we can make this happen”*  
*Ontario Ministry of Education, October 2006, p. 2).*



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