

Question 1: What are we doing well?

Our school provides a safe learning environment for our students. Teachers provide students with opportunities to work together and learn by doing and students believe they can do well in school. Staff plan so that all students can successfully meet provincial curriculum outcomes and use assessment to guide their teaching. Parents/Guardians recognize that school events focus on curriculum, learning and students and report knowing how their child is doing in school. Teachers and parents/guardians have a good relationship and parents/guardians feel welcome in our school.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the school received explicit professional development in Professional Learning Communities. All PLC's are dedicated to looking at assessment results and collaborating with peers to develop teaching strategies to meet the needs of the students not achieving. All teachers' record discussions from PLC meetings and meeting notes are monitored by school administration using Moodle.

Literacy

Our teaching staff has made a concerted effort to implement the Workshop Model in our Language Arts instruction. Our Literacy Coach has worked closely with teachers in helping them improve their Language Arts pedagogy. These individuals have offered professional development on a wide range of topics, have hosted focus groups, helped to locate resources, and hosted Literacy cafes. Our staff has also hosted parent/guardian university seminars, offering ideas, resources, and support to parents and guardians in an effort to link classroom practices to home reading supports.

Most upper grade students see themselves as good readers and feel that they're good at sharing ideas in Language Arts class. In addition, a large percentage of Grade 2 students view themselves as readers and can read a self-selected text accurately. Most of these students can also express a personal response to a text and provide lower level support for their opinion.

Most of our Grades 3, 5, and 6 students are meeting all or some expectations in reading overall as measured on external assessments. These students are also

meeting expectations in ideas, organization, and conventions in both narrative and expository forms of writing.

Math

The past three years has seen the implementation of a school-wide common assessment with regards to mental math (operations) in all grades. In addition, our Math coach has worked closely with teachers in a variety of ways to help improve our math pedagogy. Examples of how the math coach has aided teachers include the organization of our library of math manipulatives, hosting math cafes and offering professional development as well as direct support in the classroom. Our staff has also hosted parent/guardian university seminars, offering ideas, resources, and support to parents and guardians in an effort to link classroom practices to home supports.

Our teachers are embedding and assessing math skills throughout the curriculum. Most upper grade students believe that their performance in math is improving and our Grade Threes are scoring near the provincial average in Math confidence, enjoyment, and perseverance. More than half of our upper grade students report liking what they're learning in math, teachers give just-right work, and that they are good at sharing ideas. In addition, most parents/guardians report being satisfied with their child's learning in math.

School-wide mental math assessments showed that our younger students, specifically Primary and Grade One, are strong in their operational mental math skills, such as counting on and skip counting and can recognize and represent manipulatives. Our Grade 2 and 5 students have strong number sense as demonstrated on external assessments.

Our students are consistently meeting or exceeding expectations in data management, probability, patterns and algebra. Students are also meeting or exceeding expectations in measurement, geometry and spatial sense.

Question 2: What trends do we see in the data?

An examination of the past three years reveals a consistent trend regarding our school's learning environment. An examination of past data demonstrates that racism and discrimination were concerns at our school. More recent data however, indicates that very few parents, guardians, and students view this as an area of concern.

Over the past two years John MacNeil Elementary School has put strategies in place to improve the learning environment. To begin, our school has initiated a character education program highlighting and celebrating positive traits each month. Staff has received professional development in Cultural Competency and the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum and has begun to use the Second Step resource at all grade levels at consistent times each week.

Literacy

According to the Grade 2 Literacy Assessment the percentage of Grade 2 students who report reading at home has improved over the past four years. From 2005 to 2010 the percentage of Grade 2 students who are meeting board expectations has also improved steadily, from 42% to 65%. Grade 2 students continue to struggle when asked to provide support for their thinking around questions.

Less than half of students in Grade 6 scored above the provincial mean in selection of relevant material and in forming a critical response to text from 2007 to 2010. In addition, Grade 6 scores on construction of meaning and reading analysis have been below the provincial average.

Performances on external assessments show that our students are consistently meeting expectations in ideas and organization in both narrative and expository forms of writing. Similarly, results from provincial assessment have shown an improvement in the percentage of Grade 6 students who have been meeting expectations for ideas in letter writing over the past three years (68%, 83%, 90%).

Math

As mentioned above, results from external assessments suggest that our Grade

2 and Grade 5 students have solid number sense.

Student success in mental math (operations), as measured by our school based assessment, has increased over the past three years across grades as daily mental math practice has been implemented as part of our former Mental Math PFI goal. Similarly, a focus on the past few years reveals that the majority of our Grade 2 students are consistently meeting expectations in estimation and number operations. Over time fewer Grade 5 students are meeting expectations in estimation and number operations. An examination of the Grade 3 EEMLA results shows that our Grade 3 students are consistently scoring below the provincial average in problem solving with noticeable difficulty in higher level math questions.

Question 3: What challenges do you need to address in order to make the greatest difference in student achievement?

It is through the completion of year one of the PFI process that we, as a staff, came to the shared understanding that past classroom data could not be used as valid sources of data to inform the goal setting process. Professional development regarding assessment FOR learning as well as P.D. on developing common assessments will help staff arrive at a common understanding of how student data is to be collected and analyzed.

Literacy

According to the PFI Survey, less than half of upper grade students say they like to read or that they like the books in our school library. Less than half say they like to write and that they believe they are good writers.

Approximately half of our Grade 2 students are meeting board expectations in reading accuracy and fluency. While most of our Grade 2 students can express a personal response to a text and provide support for their opinion they have struggled with the critical thinking component of the assessment where they were asked to generate questions and even more so when expressing support for their questions.

Our Grade 3 students have scored below the provincial average when asked to answer all types of questions (literal and non-literal) from both fiction and non-fiction reading material.

The CAT3 Literacy Assessment from 2007/2008 showed that most Grade 4 students struggled when asked to identify the main idea of a reading. Grade 5 scores the following year revealed that 58% of students met or exceeded expectations when asked to make inferences and draw conclusions from informational text.

Less than half of students in Grade 6 scored above the provincial average in critical response from 2007-2010. Also, a consistently decreasing (58%, 46%, 38%)

percentage of Grade 6 students are scoring above the provincial average in construction of meaning from 2007 to 2010.

An examination of our assessment data reveals that there is further work to be done to improve student achievement in reading comprehension, specifically through a focus on critical thinking skills.

Math

Over the past few years, we have collected mental math assessments that were classroom based and decided upon in PLC groupings. This information, along with information from report cards and other classroom records, will assist us in developing a broader picture of our students as math learners. An examination of trends in the math data has revealed that our students have demonstrated a steady improvement in number sense and operation facts, especially in the early grades, as measured by our school-based mental math assessment.

However, external assessments have highlighted the fact that upper grade students are struggling with problem solving. As reported by teachers, ongoing classroom assessments indicate that many students are having difficulty when asked to problem solve, especially with higher order questions. These instances include questions involving estimation, multiple steps and representations, and word problems where identifying what to do is not explicit.

It is clear that our students would benefit greatly from focused instruction on problem solving within varied and meaningful contexts. Students require further experience with seeing and working with questions that challenge their understanding of math concepts in a variety of ways. A focus on the five unifying ideas in mathematics (problem solving, reasoning, communication, connections, and representations) will help students develop as math learners.

Questions 4 & 5: What are your goals for student achievement and what strategies and data will you use to achieve each goal?

Goal :

Students will demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension through a focus on critical response to text.

Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Teachers will implement on a daily basis all components of the workshop structure including:
 1. mini-lesson - explicit teaching with modeling
 2. Guided practice/Independent practice/shared practice
 3. conferencing and assessment
 4. share time

- Teachers will engage in curriculum mapping with a focus on GCO7 and use this information to inform practice.
 - a) questioning with support

 - b) making connections to text

 - c) identifying purpose and point of view

 - d) identifying prejudice, bias and stereotyping

- Within PLCs, teachers will develop and implement common assessment tools, and engage in the collection, interpretation, and organization of the data and use this to inform reading instruction.

- Teachers will imbed critical response strategies in daily speaking and listening, reading and viewing, writing and representing.

- Teachers will teach using a culturally responsive approach

Professional development to support achievement of the goal:

Staff will learn (knowledge, skills, and professional practices)?

Learning Environment

How will the learning take place (ex. PLCs, PD, time with coach, etc.)?

A common, accurate understanding of all components of the workshop model

School Wide P.D.

Working with the Literacy Coach

Attend a workshop

Continued dialogue with PLC members

Teachers of grades primary to three will engage in a book study of Kathy Collins, Growing Readers, which will outline the standard for readers workshop at the lower elementary, to gain a common understanding of the readers workshop.

Teachers of grades 4-6 will engage in a book study of Guided Readers and Writers by Fountas and Pinnell; which will be the foundation resource for these grade levels; to gain a common understanding of the workshop model.

Teachers will learn how to imbed critical responses in speaking and listening, reading and viewing, writing and representing

After school professional development sessions with literacy coach (s)

Teachers of grades primary to two will engage in a book study of Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Primary Writing to implement writers workshop at the primary grades

Teachers of grades primary to three will engage in a book study of Kathy Collins, Growing Readers, which will outline the standard for readers

	<p>workshop at the lower elementary, to gain a common understanding of the readers workshop.</p> <p>Teachers of grades 4-6 will engage in a book study of <u>Guided Readers and Writers</u> by Fountas and Pinnell; which will be the foundation resource for these grade levels; to gain a common understanding of the workshop model.</p> <p>School Wide P.D.</p> <p>Working with the Literacy Coach</p> <p>Attend a workshop</p> <p>Continued dialogue with PLC members</p>
<p>Teachers will develop common understanding of the GCO7:</p> <p>Students will be expected to respond critically to a range of texts, applying their knowledge of language, form and genre.</p>	<p>Working with the Literacy Coach</p> <p>School Wide PD</p> <p>Attend a workshop</p> <p>Continued dialogue with PLC members</p>
<p>Teachers will develop a common understanding of how assessment drives instruction</p> <p>Teachers will learn how to create and use common assessments</p>	<p>School Wide P.D. on assessment FOR learning</p> <p>Teachers will participate in professional development on creating and using common assessments</p> <p>After school professional development sessions with the HRSB assessment facilitator</p> <p>Continued dialogue with PLC members</p> <p>Work with literacy coach</p>

<p>Teachers will gain an understanding of teaching in a culturally responsive classroom while developing cultural competences</p>	<p>School wide PD facilitated by members of the HRSB African Nova Scotia teachers and administrators lead team</p> <p>Teachers will engage in professional development and courageous conversations in cultural competence as it relates to the culturally responsive classroom</p>
<p>Teachers will learn to effectively use the Bias Evaluation Instrument</p>	<p>School wide PD</p> <p>Dialogue with the DOE Personnel</p> <p>HRSB Personnel</p> <p>Continued dialogue with PLC members</p>

Data sources:		
What data will you collect?	When will you collect the data?	Who will be responsible for collecting the data?
Common assessment	November, March, May	Teachers School Administrator
Grade 2 HRSB Literacy Assessment	October	Grade 2 Teacher(s) Literacy Team School Administrator HRSB
Reading records with comprehension questions	Quarterly (September, November, March, May)	Teachers Literacy Team School Administrator
DOE External Data	As Scheduled	Administration and Literacy Team DOE
HRSB External Data	October	Literacy Team School Administrator HRSB

Goal :

Students will demonstrate improvement in problem solving within a meaningful context.

Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Teachers will develop a common understanding of the 3-part lesson model and implement the three-part lesson model in the math classroom:
 1. Before: getting ready (get students mentally ready to work on the task, be sure all expectations for products are clear)
 2. During: students work (let go, listen carefully, provide hints, observe and assess)
 3. After: class discourse (accept student solutions without evaluation, conduct discussion as students justify and evaluate results and methods)
- Within PLCs, teachers will develop and implement common assessment tools, and engage in the collection, interpretation, and organization of the data and use this to inform mathematics instruction.
- Teachers will teach using a culturally responsive approach

Professional development to support achievement of the goal:

Staff will learn (knowledge, skills, and professional practices)?

Learning Environment

How will the learning take place (ex. PLCs, PD, time with coach, etc.)?

Develop a common and accurate understanding of a problem solving approach in math through the three-part lesson model.

Work with Math Coach

Attend a workshop meeting

On-going dialogue with PLC members

How to implement the three-part lesson.

Teachers will engage in a book study of John Van de Walle's Teaching Student-Centered Mathematics: Grades K-3 (for P-3 teachers) and Teaching Student-Centered Mathematics: Grades 3-5 (for 4-6 teachers), as the foundation for the three-part lesson model.

Develop a common understanding of the five process standards in math (problem-solving, communicating about math, reasoning, connections, and representations) and how to implement them in their daily teaching practice.

<p>Teachers will develop a common understanding of how assessment drives instruction</p> <p>Teachers will learn how to create and use common assessments</p>	<p>School Wide P.D. on assessment FOR learning</p> <p>Teachers will participate in professional development on creating and using common assessments</p> <p>After school professional development sessions with the HRSB assessment facilitator</p> <p>Continued dialogue with PLC members</p> <p>Work with math coach</p>
<p>Teachers will gain an understanding of teaching in a culturally responsive classroom while developing cultural competences</p>	<p>School wide PD facilitated by members of the HRSB African Nova Scotia teachers and administrators lead team</p> <p>Teachers will engage in professional development and courageous conversations in cultural competence as it relates to the culturally responsive classroom</p>
<p>Teachers will learn to effectively use the Bias Evaluation Instrument</p>	<p>School wide PD</p> <p>Dialogue with the DOE Personnel</p> <p>HRSB Personnel</p> <p>Continued dialogue with PLC members</p>

Data sources:

What data will you collect?	When will you collect the data?	Who will be responsible for collecting the data?
Common Problem Solving assessment	November, March, May	School Administrators, Teachers, Math Team
HRSB External Assessment	October	School Administrator, Teachers, Math Team, HRSB
DOE External Assessment	Spring	School Administrators, Teachers, Math Team, DOE

Question 6: How will you involve the SAC, the parents, the students and the wider community?

We will strive to keep the school and community informed of the school's improvement goals in a variety of ways. Goals will be visible within the school and publicized in communications sent home to parents/guardians through newsletters and our school website. We will recognize our progress toward our goals with celebrations that will be creative and meaningful to our students. Monthly updates of the goals and data collected will be shared regularly with the School Advisory Council so that they can actively monitor and be kept current on the progress toward our goals. We will continue to involve members of the community by inviting them to participate in events that support reading and math.