1. What are you doing well?

Prince Arthur (P.A.J.H.) is a junior high school, which opened in 1956, and is located in South Dartmouth. Its feeder schools include Southdale-North Woodside, Shannon Park, Hawthorn, and South Woodside. Our school is a neighbourhood walking school with the exception of our French Immersion students who are bussed from all of Dartmouth. It is a school where students from many different neighbourhoods meet.

We offer English and early French Immersion programming to slightly over 400 students from grades 7-9. Our students also have the opportunity to participate in Family Studies/Technology Education (woodshop) and select one of the following fine arts electives: Visual Arts, Instrumental Music and Music Appreciation. Our students receive three Physical Education classes in our Monday to Friday cycle. There is a school focus on academics, athletics/physical activity, and fine arts.

Prince Arthur Junior High is rich with diversity in all its forms, including cultural, ethnic, socio-economic, physical and academic abilities, and lifestyles. We are a reflection of the larger communities that we serve. Students and staff both believe that Prince Arthur is a school where students feel respected and treated equally regardless of race or economic status. Many efforts are made by the school to provide opportunities to students that might not otherwise be available.

Prince Arthur recognizes the importance of healthy living and the development of the whole student. Our breakfast program is used, on average, by over 10% of our students daily. We access community grants when possible to widen the range of recreational activities we can offer our students. To meet the needs of our diverse population we offer over 60 extracurricular activities in a range of areas, including: fine arts, sports teams, leisure activities, math and science competitions, literacy, leadership, technology, and service activities.

Prince Arthur is a school that has put a concerted effort into developing curricular consistency. Teachers teaching the same courses teach from common course outlines and share common assessment plans. Teachers and students believe that we use a variety of assessments to measure the achievement of outcomes.

The school schedule is designed to facilitate the use of PLC's. Math\Science and English\ Social Studies teachers have time to meet and plan together. Teachers of common students also have time to meet and talk about their students' particular strengths and needs.

How are your students succeeding in literacy?

Our students have had considerable success in many areas of literacy. According to the 2009 results from the Halifax Regional School Board's CAT 4 assessment, 83% of students at Prince Arthur scored competent or higher in the area of informational text. Furthermore, 97% of our students achieved competent or higher in the area of specialized vocabulary.

In addition to the success demonstrated on the CAT 4 assessment, our students have shown improvement in the area of writing on the JHLA. 86% (2008) to 94% (2009) meet overall expectations in the area of writing, while scores in the areas of ideas increased 71% (2008) to 94% (2009), organization increased 79% (2008) to 95% 2009), and matters of correctness improved 81% (2008) to 85% (2009).

Through our school-wide common assessments our students have shown growth in their writing, specifically in the areas of organization (72%-84% score level 3 or higher) and ideas (75%-81% score of level 3 or higher).

Finally, based on classroom assessment and observation, our English/French Language Arts teachers have determined that our students demonstrate success in the areas of persuasive writing, generating ideas, decoding words, and their overall willingness to write. In the area of reading, teachers have noticed that our students are strong at independently selecting appropriate reading material. Students are then able to respond critically in written form and orally to what they have read.

How are your students succeeding in mathematics?

Our students have had success in many areas. Based on the CAT 4 results, our students scored 81% competent or higher in Algebraic Patterns in 2009, this has been a strength in both the CAT 3 and 4. Even though still a challenge, our students went from 57% (2008) to 75% (2009) (Competent or Proficient) in the category of Measurement, and 66% (2008) to 73% (2009) (Competent or Proficient) in the category of Number Sense. In six of the eight math strands the percentage of student improvement from 2008 to 2009 at Prince Arthur exceeds that realized Board-wide. Our math teachers have also realized this success in their classrooms.

Much of this success in math can be attributed to the initiative that our new math team, six new math teachers, has shown in efforts to improve their professional practice. We are seeing growth in our teams working collaboratively on common understanding of instruction/curriculum, common assessments, grading and prioritizing of outcomes. As a team, we are actively developing and implementing multiple sources of data to inform our instruction and assessment practices.

2. What trends do you see in the data?

Literacy

At Prince Arthur we have a dedicated team of teachers who strive to improve literacy across all areas of curriculum. For the past 2 years our focus has been on improving student achievement in the area of writing with respect to organization and ideas. In addition, we have been striving to improve overall reading comprehension, focusing on deeper level questioning to increase student achievement.

While the writing results have shown improvement, there has been a 9% drop in the number of students meeting the expectations in the reading section on the Department of Education's Junior High Literacy Assessment (JHLA) from 2007-2009. More concerning is the number of students consistently not meeting the outcomes for reading conventions on the CAT 4 assessment (34% and 35%). Finally, in the area of media text, the number of students not meeting expectations is significant (38% and 32%).

On the school-wide common assessments we have noticed a similar trend in the area of reading comprehension. While there has been a slight improvement from one year to the next, the number of students still not meeting the outcomes for reading comprehension remains at 39%.

Mathematics

At Prince Arthur we have collected and analyzed the data from the HRSB CAT 3 and 4 assessments. These assessments, although only a snapshot, indicate a number of areas that should be explored to see if similar trends are revealed within school- based classroom assessment data.

A trend has been the improvement in many of the CAT 4 strands from 2008 to 2009. Number Sense has improved from 34% low to 27%, Measurement has improved from 43% low to 25%, Geometry and Spatial Sense has improved from 25% low to 21%, Whole Number Operations has improved from 60% to 56% low, and Decimal Operations has improved from 45% to 40% low.

The CAT 4 data shows that our most significant challenges (as defined by the percentage of students scoring "low"), are in the area of computation and numerical estimation. While we have seen improvements in two of the computation and estimation strands, the number of students struggling is far greater than the number of students struggling in the other strands, and our only significant decrease occurred in Estimation and Number Operations. Furthermore, what improvement we have realized within

Computation and Numerical Estimation is at a much lower rate than for the Mathematics Category on the CAT 4 assessment. That is to say, within Estimation and Computation our challenges are greater and our level of improvement is less than in the Mathematics category.

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

Some of the challenges that are of most concern to us are how students see learning at Prince Arthur. In the last four years more than half of our students tell us that they have not felt challenged by their school work. Also, the percentage of students who enjoy learning has dropped from 60% to 50%. Our surveys tell us that 40% of students do not do their best based on interest, but rather to please Parents/Guardians / guardians or teachers.

We believe this data highlights the fact that many students do not feel challenged; hence their work ethic is not based on internal interest or curiosity, but a desire to please others. As a result they do not enjoy learning in school for its own sake, and it is questionable whether they find it meaningful. A significant challenge for us at Prince Arthur appears to be in the area of student engagement.

We believe that we can best help teachers challenge students more effectively by making teachers more knowledgeable about, and practitioners of, differentiated instruction. We address the need for differentiated instruction in both our goals and think it is fundamental in creating more challenging, and meaningful work for our students.

We also have included in our two goals a strategy which commits us to continue discussing issues of student engagement at Prince Arthur, and come to some common understandings on what it is, and how it affects academic achievement. By including this strategy in our plan we will allow ourselves the option of better addressing student engagement more specifically in the future.

Literacy

In developing our school goals, we considered reading comprehension, writing, and matters of correctness. Through the examination of our school-based common assessments, CAT 4 results, and the JHLA results, reading comprehension was identified as a challenge in our student achievement.

A lot of the board PD that has been offered on reading strategies and cueing systems was offered well before our staff had the opportunity to be part of it. One of our challenges will be to ensure all staff is involved in PD sessions that focus on our goal and strategies (content area teachers as well).

Mathematics

The school self assessment and the analysis of mathematics data revealed two key challenges that we must address if we are to significantly impact student performance.

First, and as discussed in the Trends section, our students are significantly challenged in the area of Computation and Numerical Estimation. For example, math teacher discussions and assessment evidence suggests that students are aware of the processes for solving algebraic equations; however, they lack the basic skills needed to solve the equation. That is, they know that they have to divide both sides by three but lack the basic skills to do so accurately. This challenge around basic skills is common across the math strands and suggests that our primary focus needs to be providing students with the foundations required to perform mathematical tasks. This challenge has a clear impact on how our students perform in the area of Estimation. Oftentimes, when students are asked to perform an estimation task their lack of basic skills prevents them from realizing that their answer is unreasonable.

Another one of our challenges is in developing multiple sources of data in order to accurately and regularly measure student progress. While the trends and challenges revealed in the HRSB CAT Assessment data generally mirror what we are finding in our classrooms, student focus groups indicate that students do not place the same value on external assessments as they do on internal assessments.

Furthermore, sound data gathering practices require an analysis of multiple sources of assessment evidence. That is, we believe the challenges as indicated are accurate, but in the future we need to base our goals and strategies around more sources of data that are seen as meaningful by our students. In particular this would include formative classroom assessment that directly impacts teacher decisions around instruction.

4. Based on the challenges you identified, what are your goals for student achievement?

Literacy

Students will demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension across the curriculum in both English and French Immersion classes.

Mathematics

Students will demonstrate improvement in the area of Computation and Estimation.

5. What strategies and data will you use to achieve each goal?

Literacy

Goal: S*tudents will demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension across the curriculum in both English and French Immersion classes.*

Strategies to achieve the goal:

1. **Language Arts teachers will implement Reading/Writing Workshop in their classrooms to facilitate the instruction and modeling of reading strategies.**
2. **All teachers will embed reading comprehension strategies (Active Readers) across the curriculum to support students in making meaning from text.**
3. **Language Arts teachers will create, implement, and monitor reading comprehension assessments and share the assessment data to inform teachers' practice in a timely and ongoing fashion.**
    - **MIDS**
    - **Common Grade Level Assessments**
    - **Reading Records**
4. **All teachers will implement differentiated instruction to support students in literacy achievement.**
5. **All teachers will develop a common understanding of student engagement and the relationship between student engagement, formative assessment, and academic achievement.**

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. PLC's, PD, time with coach, etc.)?**
1. • ELA/FLA teachers will develop a common understanding of the workshop model. • ELA/FLA teachers will learn how to implement reading and writing workshop in their classes.	Language Arts Teacher Specific PD with Literacy Coach and Program Staff Co-teaching/Modeling/Peer Mentoring Coach / Leader supported teacher PD; PLCs

	Resource: Teaching in Action
2. • Active Readers Comprehension Strategies • How to explicitly teach and embed reading strategies across curriculum • To develop a common understanding of how strategically teaching students to identify and use text features will increase their ability to comprehend text. • To develop activities that encourage students to use textual clues to develop understanding.	Full Staff PD Staff Meetings Shared Staff Drive-Resources Co-teaching/Modeling/Peer Mentoring Coach / Leader supported teacher PD; PLCs
3. • to develop an understanding of the process of common assessments (rubrics, checklists, levels of questioning, consistency, scoring reliability, analysis, feedback) • stages of reading development. • to implement and use Reading Records • to implement and use MIDS • how to analyze results within their PLC's to inform instruction on a regular basis.	Language Arts Teacher Specific PD related to creation, implementation and analysis of reading comprehension assessments PLC's with Coach HRSB Assessment Personnel supported PD; PLCs Resource: AR Assessment Binder
4. • how to address the literacy needs and learning styles of all students in their classes. • How to meet the learning needs of all students in the classroom • how to ensure equity and equitable instruction for all students. • how to use formative assessment to provide feedback and inform teacher practice • To use differentiated instructional strategies for all subject areas.	Full Staff PD School based PD day; Large group, then smaller subject area group PD format; Coach & Leader supported, RCH, Student Services
5. • the dimensions of student engagement and their relationship to student achievement. • Formative assessment practices/feedback	Full Staff meetings/PD sessions - examining current research Team meetings - discussion and observing/making connections to Prince Arthur Junior High. Assessment Dept. support

Data sources:

What data will you collect?	When will you collect the data?	Who will be responsible for collecting the data?
HRSB C.A.T. 4	Selected Response – October Constructed Response - January	Board /Administration
JHLA	Jan	Board /Administration
Common Formative Grade Level Classroom Assessments directly related to classroom content	As determined by PLC's at various times of the year	ELA / FLA Teachers
MIDS (Main Idea and Supporting Details)	Oct (gr 7), May (gr. 7,8,9)	ELA / FLA Teachers
Reading Records	Oct. / May	ELA / FLA Teachers
Anecdotal Comments of Cross-Curricular implementation pertaining to reading comprehension and determining importance	Oct, Dec, Feb, Apr, June	Administration in conjunction with classroom teachers

Mathematics

Goal: Students will demonstrate improvement in the area of Computation and Estimation.

Strategies to achieve the goal:

1. Math teachers will explore and gain a common understanding of best practices pertaining to Computation and Estimation and implement these practices on a daily basis
2. Math teachers will help students make connections between their daily mental math strategies and the application of computations and estimation by reinforcing basic facts, accuracy and strategy development
3. Math teachers will create, implement, and monitor Math Computation and Estimation Assessments and share the assessment data to inform practice in a timely and ongoing fashion
4. Math teachers will implement differentiated lessons within their daily instruction
5. All teachers will embed Computation and Estimation Strategies across the curriculum in a variety of subject areas.
6. All teachers will develop a common understanding of student engagement and the relationship between student engagement, formative assessment, and academic achievement.

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.)?
1. • scope and sequence of the Math Curriculum (by grade level) • progression of outcomes related to Computation and Estimation with particular attention to Number Sense and Operations (Grade 7-9) • to effectively communicate the difference between estimation and computation • best instructional practices for teaching computation and estimation • an understanding of the five representations and how to implement them into instruction and assessment • how to model appropriate language, terminology and questioning when teaching Computation and Estimation	Math Teacher PD Math Coach / Leader supported teacher PD; PLCs Co-teaching/Modeling/Peer Mentoring

2. • the connections between mental math documents and grade level curriculum guides • potential resources that support mental math programs specific to grade level (LRT website, mental math videos and online mental math documents) • how to introduce, reinforce and assess mental math strategies • how to engage students in applying their mental math strategies to their computation and estimation work	Math Teacher PD Math Coach / Leader supported teacher PD; PLCs Co-teaching/Modeling/Peer Mentoring
3. • to develop an understanding of the process of common assessments (rubrics, levels of questioning, consistency, scoring reliability, analysis, feedback) • Establish a common understanding of the criteria for student success with computation and estimation at each grade level • Create and implement rubrics within their classroom assessments • How to create effective assessments (levels of questioning) • clarity on the evaluation Rubric and have consistency in evaluating student work (Scoring reliability process) • How to analyze results within PLC's to inform instruction on a regular basis	Math Teacher PD Math Coach / Leader supported teacher PD; PLCs Co-teaching/Modeling/Peer Mentoring
4. • learn strategies that help teachers get to know their students • How to meet the learning needs of all students in the classroom • how to ensure equity and equitable instruction for all students. • how to use formative assessment to provide feedback and inform teacher practice • To use differentiated instructional strategies for all subject areas.	Full Staff PD School based PD day; Large group, then smaller subject area group PD format; Coach & Leader supported, RCH, Student Services
5. • A common understanding of Computation	Full Staff PD

and Estimation • How to connect computation and estimation to real life situations • how to incorporate computation and estimation into curriculum	School based PD day; Coach & Leader supported Co-teaching/Modeling/Peer Mentoring
6. • the dimensions of student engagement and their relationship to student achievement. • Formative assessment practices/feedback	Full Staff meetings/PD sessions - examining current research Team meetings - discussion and observing/making connections to Prince Arthur Junior High. Assessment Dept. support

Data sources:

What data will you collect?	When will you collect the data?	Who will be responsible for collecting the data?
HRSB, Grade 8 CAT 4 Assessment	Selected Response – October Constructed Response - January	Board / Administration
Common Formative Grade Level Classroom Assessments directly related to classroom content	As determined by PLC's at various times of the year	Math Teachers
Grade Level Common Computation and Estimation Assessments	Oct (gr. 7), May (gr. 7,8,9)	Math Teachers
Anecdotal Comments of Cross-Curricular implementation pertaining to Computation and Estimation	Oct, Dec, Feb, Apr, June	Administration

6. How will we involve the School Advisory Committee, Parents/Guardians, Students and the wider community in the P.F.I. process?

The School Advisory Committee has been involved in the P.F.I. process step by step, as we worked our way through year one of the process and developed our goals. The SAC have looked at our School Community Demographics, the School Self-Assessment, Cat 4 and JHLA data, and the two goals that were finally established this year. Input has been invited at every step. Also many members of the SAC attended board P.D. this year on how best to assist in the planning for improvement process.

Next year the SAC will be apprised of School based data, external assessments and changes to the plan as we move forward.

To communicate the plan to Parents/Guardians we will post it on our website, on the HRSB website, under school finder, and introduce it in our Annual Report to the

Community. The Annual Report to the Community and School Improvement Plan will also be discussed at next September's introductory Curriculum Night. The goals will be introduced to Parents/Guardians of incoming grade seven students in June 2010 at our transition meeting for Parents/Guardians.

A part of our ongoing communication with Parents/Guardians P.F.I. issues will be discussed in newsletters which are available in hard copy and electronic format.

In September there will be a need to introduce the students to our P.F.I. goals. This will happen in assemblies in September 2010.

We also will need to discuss as a staff how best to present the new plan visually in the school to students and all our visitors.

Proposed Budget

Professional Development- **$4,500-**This will pay for substitute days which will be used to allow teachers to work on developing the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve our goals.

Professional Resources- **$550-** Books, subscriptions to magazines, online resources, etc. These resources will be identified with input from board curriculum personnel and PAJH staff.

Total-**$5,050**