

**The Plan for Improving Student Learning at Caledonia Junior  
High School 2009 – 2010: Responding to Six Guiding  
Questions**

**What are we doing well?**

**What trends do we see in the data?**

**What challenges do we need to address in order to make the greatest difference in student achievement?**

**Based on the challenges we identified, what are our goals for student achievement?**

**What strategies and data will we use to achieve each goal?**

**How will we involve the SAC, parents, the students, and the wider community?**

## **What are we doing well?**

We have realized many successes at Caledonia the past few years in terms of both academic and social learning, and we are clearly doing a number of things well. In a general sense, our students enjoy coming to school, assert a sense of belonging, see the school as a safe, engaging, and positive place to learn, and believe that our teachers are caring and attentive to their learning needs. These views are supported by student survey data that indicates steady improvement in all these areas, and also by the fact that over the past three years we have realized an 80 % decrease in office referrals, a 75 % decline in the number of suspensions, and a 17 % increase in the number of students who have completed 100 % of their assessments.

Caledonia is also a school that has incorporated the principles of a Professional Learning Community (PLC), in a purposeful and improving manner. We have shifted the focus and culture from *teaching* to *learning*, teachers are being afforded more opportunities to collaborate with a clear focus on student achievement and assessment / evaluation strategies, and our decisions are being driven by developing and analyzing authentic assessment results and related data. Simply, we are much better at determining what the students need to learn, assessing if they have learned, and addressing the needs of those who have not learned in an environment that is collaborative and focused on focused on instructional practices.

We are also doing a number of things well in the context of Literacy. The CAT 4 Literacy Assessment, data shows that 91 % of our students are competent in the area of determining Central Thought, 98 % are competent in the area of Specialized Vocabulary, and of the nine Literacy areas measured Caledonia equaled or exceeded the overall Board performance in all Nine categories as defined by the number of students at or above minimum competent (Stanine Four). Furthermore, the 2007 – 2008 Junior High Literacy Assessment (JHLA) revealed that 94 % of students are meeting reading expectations, and we are proud to report that of the 20 students who entered grade 7 on a Literacy Support Plan, 7 were removed from such plans as a result of the JHLA. Importantly, the JHLA analysis also revealed that any student who entered Caledonia in grade 7 without an LSP did not have this status changed as result of the JHLA. Finally, on site Literacy Assessments suggest that student writing is improving in the areas of Ideas, Organization, and Conventions, though to different degrees at different grade levels.

As relates to Numeracy, the Grade 9 CAT 3 Assessment shows overall improvement the past three years in that there has been an increase in the percentage of students at Stanine Four (competent), from 79 % to 84 %. This assessment also reveals a significant increase in the determined grade level of our students, changing from 8.7 in 2005 to 10.1 in 2008. Furthermore, we have seen anywhere from a 11 % to 16 % increase in the number of students scoring competent in the areas of Number Concepts, Order of Operations, and Algebraic Number Operations. Improvement has been less marked though steady in the areas of Probability, Integer Operations, and Algebraic Patterns, and more students are meeting learning expectations for Language Arts as revealed through Term report Grades.

All told, what we are doing well can be summarized by stating that Caledonia has become a safer, more engaging, collaborative and focused school over the past three

years. Our journey has been marked by a clear shift toward placing student achievement and improved student learning at the heart of every decision we make.

## **What trends do we see in the data?**

The school self-assessment and Planning for Improvement process, including analysis of data from a broad range of sources and covering a myriad of educational indicators, has rendered a snapshot of Caledonia as a school that has improved in many and significant ways and is marked by a professional commitment to improve student learning. Obviously, the process has revealed key areas for improvement and, thus, the following summarizes both promising and concerning trends that emerge from the data.

As to promising trends, survey data indicates that teachers overwhelmingly and strongly agree that the school has a clear vision for improved student learning that is marked by collaboration, the embedding of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and a growing and meaningful role in the Planning for Improvement decision-making process. Consequently, it is not surprising that data around Year Plans, assessment exemplars, evaluation rubrics and common assessments, provides clear evidence that instruction and assessment is rooted in an aligned, guaranteed and viable curriculum, and that we are making progress toward more fully incorporating the principles of assessment *for* and *as* learning.

Furthermore, the analysis of Report Card grades and Assessment Completed Rates over the past two years shows that more students are meeting learning expectations and completing assessments. Indeed, we have realized a 17 % increase in the number of students completing 100 % of assessments in all eight subjects, and a 23 % increase in the number of students completing 100 % of assessments in at least seven of the eight subjects.

Moreover, teacher, parent and guardian surveys, in conjunction with data related to office referrals and suspensions, indicate that Caledonia has a very positive, safe and respectful learning environment. For example, 72 % of surveyed students express a strong sense of belonging at Caledonia, we have realized a 55 % decline in the number of office referrals over the past two years, and there has been a 75 % decline in the number of suspensions (in and out of school) over the past two years.

Additionally, data related to assessment, instruction, and adaptations clearly suggests that we have made consistent progress toward creating the culture and the structure / processes that support differentiated learning and systematic, systemic and timely interventions for struggling students. We have a number of alternative learning opportunities for students that extend beyond LA and Math, and include hands-on activities allowing students to express their learning through art and technology education.

Finally, there are some clear and promising trends in the context of Literacy and Numeracy. First, and as relates to Literacy, the CAT 4 Literacy Assessment, data shows that 91 % of our students are competent in the area of determining Central Thought, 98 % are competent in the area of Specialized Vocabulary, and of the nine Literacy areas measured Caledonia equaled or exceeded the overall Board performance in all Nine categories as defined by the number of students at or above minimum competent (Stanine Four). Furthermore, the 2007 – 2008 Junior High Literacy Assessment (JHLA) revealed that 94 % of students are meeting reading expectations, and we are proud to report that of the 20 students who entered grade 7 on a Literacy Support Plan, 7 were removed from

such plans as a result of the JHLA. Importantly, the JHLA analysis also revealed that any student who entered Caledonia in grade 7 without an LSP did not have this status changed as result of the JHLA. Finally, on site Literacy Assessments suggest that student writing is improving in the areas of Ideas, Organization, and Conventions, though to different degrees at different grade levels.

Second, and as relates to Numeracy, the Grade 9 CAT 3 Assessment shows overall improvement the past three years in that there has been an increase in the percentage of students at Stanine Four (competent), from 79 % to 84 %. This assessment also reveals a significant increase in the determined grade level of our students, changing from 8.7 in 2005 to 10.1 in 2008. Furthermore, we have seen anywhere from a 11 % to 16 % increase in the number of students scoring competent in the areas of Number Concepts, Order of Operations, and Algebraic Number Operations. Improvement has been less marked though steady in the areas of Probability, Integer Operations, and Algebraic Patterns.

As to concerning trends, student surveys clearly reveal that far too many students feel that rules and consequences are not applied equally to all students. We have improved over the past few years; however, much needs to be done in terms of communicating expectations, consequences and the difference between *fairness* and *equality* when it comes to disciplining students and modifying behaviour.

Furthermore, data from parent / guardian surveys, Curriculum Nights and Parent / Teacher Interviews suggests that little has changed in terms of parental involvement with the school. The fact of the matter is that we need to increase parental involvement, particularly as relates to our struggling students as they progress from grade 7 to 9.

Moreover, and while we have noted significant improvement, Assessment Completed Rates data also indicates that a significant percentage of students are not submitting assessments and that this percentage clearly increases as students proceed through the junior high grades. Tied to this conclusion is the fact that we are realizing minimal and inconsistent success with many of our severely “at risk” students. That is to say, while suspensions and office referrals are clearly decreasing, the majority of suspensions and referrals pertain to a core group of students.

Finally, there are some clear and concerning trends as relates to Literacy and Numeracy. First, and as relates to Literacy, the CAT 4 Literacy Assessment indicates that only 76 % of our students were at least Competent in the area of General Vocabulary, and that 25 % of our students scored Low on the ability to analyze text / graphics. Furthermore, and while we are closing the learning gap between English and French Immersion students, the school based Literacy Assessment reveals an 18 % difference between the number of English students meeting assessment expectations ( 68 %), and the number of French immersion students meeting expectations ( 86 %). Moreover, this Assessment also revealed that our students continue to struggle with writing in the areas of Ideas, Organization, and Conventions.

Second, and as relates to Numeracy, and as relates to the Grade 9 CAT 3 (2005 – 2008), there is a decline in the percentage of students considered competent in the area of fractions from 82 % to 63 %. We have also seen a decline in the area of communication from 39 % to 35 %. Furthermore, and in reference to the Grade 8 CAT 4 Assessment, less than 60 % of students were competent in the areas of Data Management, Whole Number Operations, and Decimal Operations. Moreover, and as supported by CAT Assessments

and the school Problem Solving Assessment, our students clearly struggle with both Problem Solving and Communication.

## **What challenges do we need to address in order to make the greatest difference in student achievement?**

The self-assessment process revealed a number of challenges for Caledonia Junior High School, and we will continue to move forward on all of these issues. However, we believe that there are two challenges we can address through the Planning for Improvement process that will make the greatest difference in student learning. Through the corresponding use of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, and the focus on learning, collaboration, and a results orientation, we can connect our goals and challenges, and implement strategies for improvement across all grades and subject areas.

First, and while recognizing the improvements and strengths we have realized and developed in the area of mathematics, anecdotal and assessment evidence clearly indicates that our students significantly struggle in the areas of Problem Solving (Problem Solving and Communication). As this is an area that impacts a student's ability to learn across the mathematic strands (Number Operations, Fractions and so on), addressing this challenge is paramount. Another advantage to focusing on Problem Solving is that it gives teachers the flexibility to use problem solving assessments as a means to re-enforce learning across the math strands. Simply put, if a math team determines that fractions is proving problematic for students, then problem solving activities can be used to re-enforce learning for both problem solving and fractions.

Second, and while again recognizing both the gains we have made in the area of writing and the challenges we face in other areas of Language Arts, assessment evidence suggests that a focus on writing in the areas of Ideas, Organization, and Matters of Correctness (Conventions), will have the greatest impact on student learning across the grades, and subject areas. Furthermore, there are ample opportunities to incorporate writing across the curriculum and, thus, this focus can be embraced and re-enforced at the school-wide level.

**Based on the challenges we identified, what are our goals for student achievement?**

**Numeracy**

*Our students will demonstrate improvements in Numeracy in the area of Problem Solving.*

**Literacy**

*Our students will demonstrate improvements in writing with a focus on Ideas, Organization and Matters of Correctness (conventions).*

## What strategies and data will we use to achieve each goal?

### Mathematics Goal

*Our students will demonstrate improvements in Problem Solving and Communication in Mathematics.*

#### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- **Math teachers will work collaboratively to explore and implement best practices around Problem Solving and Communication**
  - Teachers will have clarity around the strategies of problem solving
  - Teachers will have clarity around good communication in Mathematics including the five Representations
  - Teachers will use lessons that increase the cognitive demand of students
  - Teachers will use real life contexts during instruction
  - Teachers will instruct using multiple representations where possible
  - Teachers will instruct students as to correct terminology and how to identify key words within Problems
  - Teachers will use a problem solving approach in daily instruction
  - Teachers will collaborate with the Math coordinator/facilitator
  
- **Math teachers will create, implement and monitor semi-annually a Math Problem Solving and Communication Assessment.**
  - Teachers will decide as teams the assessment questions
  - Teachers will be clear on the evaluation Rubric and have consistency in evaluating student work (Scoring reliability process)
  - Teachers will gather a bank of assessment exemplars to aid in consistent evaluation and to use with the students
  - Teachers will administer a School Wide semi-annual problem solving and communication assessment
  - Teachers will adapt programming, strategies and assessment / evaluation for diverse learners
  - Teachers will analyze results within PLCs to inform instruction on a regular basis
  - Teachers will implement strategies to aid struggling students
  - Teachers will collaborate with the math coordinator/facilitator for the creation, Implementation, scoring reliability and analysis
  
- **Teachers will embed Problem Solving Strategies across the curriculum in a variety of subject areas**
  - Teachers will collaborate upon, and become familiar with the problem solving strategies and suggest ways in which this could be applied to their subjects
  - Teachers will instruct and use the strategies for problem solving in non-math classes
  - Teachers will promote an open and safe learning environment conducive to risk-taking
  - Teachers will engage the Math and Literacy coordinator/facilitator
  - Teachers will have Problem Solving strategies and rubrics (visuals) posted in classrooms

<b>Professional development to support achievement of the goal:</b>		
Staff will engage in the following learning activities...	Staff will learn the following from the professional learning activities (knowledge, skills, and professional practices)...	
Problem Solving and Communication PD related to Resources and Instruction for Math teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers will learn problem solving strategies and resources available</li> <li>• Teachers will learn best practices for instruction around problem solving such as the Three Part lesson plan model</li> <li>• Teachers will learn to be functional and cognizant of all levels of questioning and using multiple representations</li> <li>• Teachers will learn strategies for differentiated instruction</li> <li>• Teachers will have the opportunity to create Problem Solving and Communication assessment pieces through collaboration with colleagues and HRSB math support personnel</li> </ul>	
Problem Solving PD related to Creation, Administrating, and Analyzing results of the Problem Solving Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers will learn how to construct meaningful, focused, clear and engaging problems with connection to content / math outcome strands</li> <li>• Teachers will learn and consistently apply the rubric performance criteria for Problem Solving and Communication</li> <li>• Teachers will learn how to analyze results of the assessment</li> <li>• Teacher will learn how to implement effective plans of intervention for struggling students</li> </ul>	
Problem Solving PD related to Math Across the Curriculum with attention to Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers will learn what Problem Solving looks like</li> <li>• Teachers will learn strategies to problem solving</li> <li>• Teachers will learn strategies that can be applied in their classroom</li> <li>• Teachers will learn how to incorporate Problem Solving into their curriculum</li> </ul>	
<b>Data Sources:</b>		
What data will you collect?	When will you collect the data?	Who will be responsible for collecting the data? (All data will be forwarded by the individuals indicated below to Administration at the time of data collection)
Grade 8 CAT	When provided by the Board	Administration
Common Formative Grade Level Classroom Assessments directly related to classroom content	As determined by PLCs at various times of the year	Math Teachers
School-Wide Common Problem Solving Assessment	Two times per year	Math Teachers

## Literacy Goal

**Our students will demonstrate improvements in writing with a focus on Ideas, Organization and Matters of Correctness (conventions).**

### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- **Implement best practices in writing instruction (such as conferences / workshops).** We will maintain and enhance current ELA practices and implement new ones. The following will support this strategy:
  1. Provide a session during September PD Day that will focus on activities related to writing traits and the writing conferences / workshop model
  2. Professional Development Committee will schedule time during school based professional development days for teachers to explore literacy resources
  3. Administrators will work with teachers to provide opportunities for them to visit other classrooms. e.g. provide release time
  4. Use scheduled team meetings (by content, but also across the grades), for discussions related to improving student writing
  5. Enlist our Literacy Coordinator to develop and peer-coach teachers around incorporating writing mini-lessons into instructional practices, to gather, share and organize new resources, and to maintain a school based Literacy Resource Room
  6. Have the Literacy Coach attend LA Team meetings to update teachers about newly acquired resources and to promote writing initiatives, strategies and practices
  7. Use the Literacy Coach to support teachers in the class as they utilize the writing workshop / conference model
  
- **Entrench Literacy across the Curriculum.** Non-Language Arts teachers will develop and implement instructional strategies to support writing in their subject area. The following will support this strategy:
  1. Provide a session during September PD Day that will focus on writing strategies to help students generate and organize ideas within their specific subject areas.
  2. Use team meetings for discussions related to implementing strategies that will improve student writing
  3. Use scheduled staff meetings for providing opportunities for non-LA teachers to develop a common understanding of the strategies and performance criteria (evaluation rubric), used by the LA teachers.
  
- **Develop, administer and utilize a specific writing assessment task for each grade level.**
  1. The manner by which the assessment is delivered will be reviewed by ELA teachers, with support of the Literacy Coach and Administration.
  2. ELA teachers at each grade level will administer the common writing assessment task each November and May.
  3. Develop scoring reliability amongst grade level LA teachers by utilizing the support of the Literacy Coach, and making available a series of writing exemplars reflective of varied writing performance levels.
  
- **Curriculum Mapping around writing.** All LA teachers will convene as a group and re-visit decisions made around the following:

1. what writing genres will be used at what grade levels as a means to the end of practicing and measuring performance
  2. what instructional strategies will be used at what grade level as a tool to develop and improve student writing
- **Create a Transition Writing Portfolio for each student in Grades 7 - 8.** The pieces selected for this portfolio will be tied directly to the writing goal. The contents of the portfolio will focus on the curriculum outcomes that address Ideas, Organization, and Matters of Correction (GCOs 8, 9, and 10), and will be scored in reference to a writing rubric that is common to each grade level. This approach will allow teachers to consistently and accurately monitor student performance and growth between the semi-annual Literacy Assessments (see strategy immediately below). It is important that the teacher and student collaborate on the Portfolio choices if to provide an accurate *and* individualized snapshot of student performance and interest. Receiving teachers will use the portfolio as a transition document, assessment tool, and to guide instructional practice / strategies, and it will be used by students to monitor writing development and the acquisition of new skills.
1. During June staff meetings and team time, the criteria for selection and the collection process will be developed by ELA teachers.
  2. By June of 2009, teachers and students will select several writing exemplars from the students' Language Arts Assessment Binders and place them in a newly developed student portfolio that will be provided to the Language Arts teacher in the following year.
  3. Going forward, this portfolio process will be used as an assessment tool of learning and for learning in support of students' growth toward the literacy goal.

## **How will we involve the SAC, parents, the students, and the wider community?**

In order for improved student learning to occur and sustain, all stakeholders must have a connection to our numeracy and literacy goals. The degree to which teachers have been, are, and will be involved in the Planning for Improvement process is clear enough; however we need to also ensure that the School Advisory Council, parents / guardians, students, and the wider community are provided opportunities to be actively and consistently involved and informed about the course we have charted.

The School Advisory Council has been consistently informed and involved over the past three years, particularly as relates to student engagement, and given the breadth of community representation on the SAC has acted as a conduit to the wider community in the context of communicating and supporting our goals for improved student achievement. We have sought the insight and suggestions of SAC members on many learning issues, including manners to help support parents and guardians in their efforts to support student learning around literacy and numeracy. We will continue to do so, and also look to involve parents / guardians in discussions related directly to our literacy and math goals that extend beyond parent / guardian survey data.

As to students, there is a growing awareness that we are a school that has a clear focus on student achievement and that we have “a plan” with a sharp focus on writing and problem solving. They have been directly involved in both the creation and reflection process related to the Literacy Assessment and Problem Solving Assessment, have contributed greatly through the WDYDIST survey with suggestions on how to make mathematics more engaging, and the HRSB student surveys continue to be a powerful source for gauging the overall direction of our school and student learning.

In terms of reporting our progress, we will continue to use classroom assessment events, Learning Profiles, Assessment Binders for Mathematics and Literacy, Report Card comments, our monthly newsletter, student assemblies, the school webpage, and monthly SAC meetings. Of course, Caledonia’s Annual Report to the Community will become a major tool in our effort to communicate student achievement.