

## Response to the Seven Questions

### 1. What are we doing well?

Seaside Elementary has become a professional learning community. The staff is collectively committed to improving student achievement. In our weekly PLCs, teachers ask: what do we want students to know? how will we be sure that they have learned what we want them to know? and how will we respond when targets are not achieved? At each grade level, teachers agree to a common pacing of the curriculum outcomes to be learned. Teachers actively engage in developing assessments with clear criteria and maintain consistent expectations.

Teachers at Seaside have become more assessment literate and have expanded their repertoire of assessment tools. Teachers are more aware of how to gather classroom data to inform instruction. It has become common practice to hold school-wide assessments in math and literacy. The results from these assessments are analyzed during PLCs to determine what we are doing well and what we have to teach at the class, grade and school level to improve student achievement.

There is a strong commitment to linking outcomes with instruction in our school. There is a high level of reflective, collegial sharing of what students are expected to learn. Teachers take time to collaborate on a regular basis to plan engaging activities, share best practices and locate resources that support the implementation of the PSP.

Teachers are continually seeking professional development and working with a literacy coordinator to expand our repertoire of best practices in literacy instruction. Reader's and writer's workshops are being launched. Our commitment to acquire and utilize rich literature is evidenced by the wealth of classroom libraries and extensive reading resources that reflect student interests and abilities. Teachers are engaging in conversation about literacy and reflecting collaboratively on how to refine their own instruction.

Teachers are following a yearly math curriculum plan that targets outcomes to achieve for each term. Our school has sufficient resources to support the math curriculum. We are continually seeking professional development and working with an assigned math coordinator to expand our repertoire of teaching strategies. Teachers are using math manipulatives as a strategy to reinforce and support the understanding of concepts. We are establishing the practice of creating common assessments, tracking achievement of outcomes and using results to address any weaknesses and build on strengths.

### 2. What trends do you see in the data?

The Halifax Regional School Board Survey results revealed that reading is practiced regularly at home and most of our parents are satisfied with their child's learning in language arts. Most students consider themselves good readers and like to read. Over the last several years, the Elementary Literacy Assessment has indicated that there is a gradual decline in the number of students meeting the expectations for reading. Results show that the reading comprehension

scores were all below 80% and found to be mediocre across all genres. Students displayed minimal understanding of media text and text features. Strategic use of cueing systems was also very weak. Our latest oral reading records confirm that students struggle with comprehension at their reading level.

Annual school-wide writing assessments, which gather information on the level of proficiency in the six traits of quality writing, showed varied strengths and needs at each grade level. Strengths were noted in organization of ideas and the appropriate use of voice. Weaknesses were evident in paragraph development, the use of descriptive vocabulary, and the conclusion of a writing piece. The Halifax Regional School Board survey data indicates that although most of our students say that they are good writers, a lower number state that they like to write. Over the last several years, the Elementary Literacy Assessment results indicate a significant and steady increase in the number of students who have met the expectations in writing.

School-wide math assessments on number sense and place value indicate proficiency at using base ten materials to represent numbers, placing numbers on a number line, reading numbers to the millions and comparing and ordering numbers. Weaknesses were apparent in explaining how numbers were rounded or how one decimal number is greater than another. Although the most recent school-wide assessment indicated a significant increase in scores in place value, students continue to score significantly lower in level two questions. This evidence shows that students need to engage in activities that stimulate mathematical thinking, problem-solving and communication.

The Canadian Achievement Tests indicated that the majority of students are struggling to meet expectations in math. Strengths are noted in measurement, data analysis, geometry and spatial sense. Challenges are evident in computation and numerical estimation concepts, as very few students demonstrated proficiency in these strands. Thirty percent of students demonstrated competency/proficiency in responding to questions having multiple steps and/or multiple decision points. These scores are similar to our findings in our school-wide assessment in that 79% of students were unable to communicate their thinking as they solve problem involving multiple steps.

The Halifax Regional School Board survey results reveal that both parent and teacher indicate there is a need for our school to showcase and celebrate student achievement to parents and the community on a regular basis.

### **3. What improvements will make the greatest difference to increasing student achievement?**

In order to improve our identified concerns in literacy, we require professional development in explicit instruction of reading comprehension strategies, visual media, text features and word study.

In math, instructional strategies in our classrooms need to support a problem solving approach to learning. Professional development sessions need to be held to ensure staff has a common understanding of what effective communication of learning and thinking looks and sounds like using the five representations: pictorial, concrete, symbolic, verbal, and contextual. Opportunities need to be made for students to talk about their strategies in order to improve in answering level two questions.

We need to integrate meaningful celebrations of student achievement into our school/community culture on a regular basis.

#### **4. Of the challenges that were identified, which ones will be targeted for improvement?**

The areas our school has targeted for improvement are:

- 1) Reading comprehension
- 2) Communication of learning and thinking in mathematics
- 3) Celebrating student achievement.

#### **5. What does the school plan to do?**

**Goal:** *To improve student achievement in comprehension strategies, specifically their ability to understand text at their level.*

**Strategies:**

- Provide explicit instruction of comprehension strategies using gradual release of responsibility model and give opportunities to students to practice the strategies.
- Provide feedback to students regarding 1) reading for meaning, 2) developing students' ability to self-monitor their comprehension, and 3) applying the strategies.
- Acquire common understanding and language of retelling.
- Establish a baseline of student reading comprehension of text at their level by assessing ability to retell.
- Create a plan of how and when comprehension strategies will be taught at each grade level.
- Compile an inventory of resources that support effective teaching of comprehension strategies, including professional and student reading resources.
- Collaboratively develop mini-lessons to effectively teach the comprehension strategies.
- Purchase the National Geographic Non-fiction Reading and Writing Workshop for each grade level.
- Purchase additional relevant resources that support the implementation of comprehension strategies.
- Utilize the literacy coordinator to model best practices in classrooms and to deliver professional development and Giving Everyone More Support sessions.
- Offer parent workshops to support parents with student learning at home.
- Display posters of comprehension strategies in all classrooms.
- Provide each student with a strategy bookmark from AYR binder.

**Professional Learning to Support Achievement of Goal:**

| <b>Teachers will engage in the following professional development.</b>   | <b>Teachers will learn the following from engagement in the professional learning activities.</b>   |
|--|---|
| The structure for retelling of fiction and non-fiction when using Oral Reading Records.  | Increased proficiency in assessing comprehension by acquiring common understanding of retelling.  |
| Explicit instruction in how to effectively teach visualizing, predicting, synthesizing, inferring and questioning.   | Teachers will become more equipped with best practices in teaching these comprehension strategies.  |
| Reader's Workshop approach and the gradual release of responsibility in daily instruction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explicit instruction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Time to practice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conferencing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Time to Share</li> </ul> | Teachers will be able to explicitly teach and assess comprehension strategies through read alouds, guided reading, and small and whole group instruction. |
| On the use of resources to support comprehension in different genres.  | Teachers will learn to be more proficient in identifying and utilizing available resources to support developing comprehension.                           |

**Goal:** *To improve student achievement in communicating learning and thinking in mathematics.*

**Strategies:**

- Explicitly teach students the five representations (pictorial, concrete, symbolic, verbal, and contextual) through a problem-based approach.
- Instruct students how to communicate their learning and thinking in problem-solving.
- Provide students with exemplars.
- Implement the use of math journals.
- Compile an inventory of resources that support effective teaching of best practices in mathematics.
- Develop rubrics and common assessments to acquire a baseline, with help from the math coordinator.
- Analyze data regularly to inform on-going instruction.
- Purchase materials that support instruction of problem-solving and communicating mathematical thinking.
- Offer parent workshops to support parents with student learning at home.

**Professional Learning to Support Achievement of Goal:**

| <b>Teachers will engage in the following professional development.</b>                                    | <b>Teachers will learn the following from engagement in the professional learning activities.</b> |
|---|---|
| How to effectively teach the five representations: pictorial, concrete, symbolic, verbal, and contextual. | Teachers will learn what effective use of the representations looks like.                         |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| How to use math journals.  | Teachers will learn the purpose and effective use of math journals, how to implement them in the classroom and how to use them for assessment. |
| Asking open-ended questions.   | Teachers will know what good questions look like, how to create them and how to use them in math instruction.                                  |
| Using manipulatives to support learning of concepts                                  | Teachers will gain confidence in using manipulatives to support the curriculum.  |
| How to create a climate that will facilitate communication and cooperative learning. | Teachers will gain competency in how to create a learning environment that fosters and values thinking as part of problem-solving in math.     |
| Real world and mathematical applications.  | Teachers will expand their awareness of how to make connections between math curriculum and real life applications.                            |

**Goal:** *To create a culture within our school/community that values expressing our appreciation and admiration of student achievement.*

**Strategies:**

- Establish a Celebrating Student Success committee that will focus on implementing ways to celebrate and highlight student achievement. The committee will be responsible for:
  - Determine creative ways to celebrate student success within the classroom and as a school.
  - Create a calendar of general events that will involve the community in celebrating student success.
  - Introduce ideas for celebratory rituals to teachers (silent cheers, toasts, waves), to use in their classrooms.
  - Develop a survey to collect baseline data on ways teachers celebrate success in their classroom.

**Professional Learning to Support Achievement of Goal:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Teachers will engage in the following professional development.</b> | <b>Teachers will learn the following from engagement in the professional learning activities.</b>           |
| Quantum teaching: “If it is worth learning, it is worth celebrating.”  | Teachers will better understand the purpose of celebrating students’ success and how it fosters engagement. |

**6. How will we know what is being done is making a difference for student achievement?**

The students’ growth in comprehension strategies will be measured by comparing data. Baseline data will be gathered in October on *retelling* to determine students’ literal understanding of text. March data will be compared to the baseline data to determine progress and future PD needs. The on-going collection of data from comprehension rubric will be analyzed in PLCs to monitor

growth and determine areas that require focused attention. Elementary Literacy Assessment data will also be analyzed and compared to previous years.

Baseline data will be gathered by School wide Math assessment in first term. Data collected in third term will be compared to the baseline results. The on-going collection of data from common assessments will be analyzed in PLCs to monitor growth and identify areas that require focused attention.

| <b>Data sources used to monitor progress</b>  | <b>Time frames for the data collections</b>           | <b>Responsibility for data collection</b>               |
|---|---|---|
| <b>1. Literacy</b>  |   |   |
| Oral Reading Records  | Retelling<br>October - baseline<br>March – Comparison | Classroom teacher                                       |
| Common assessment of individual strategies<br>Comprehension Rubric                      | On-going  | Classroom teacher                                       |
| Elementary Literacy Assessment  | Yearly (March)  | Assigned staff member                                   |
| Classroom assessment  | On-going  | Classroom teacher                                       |
| <b>2. Math</b>  |   |   |
| School-wide math assessment   | Twice a year  | Classroom teacher                                       |
| Classroom assessment  | On-going  | Classroom teacher                                       |
| Common assessment   | On-going  | Classroom teacher                                       |
| <b>3. Celebrating Student Achievement</b>   |   |   |
| Feedback from random sample of students.  | Once per term   | Celebrating Student Success Committee<br>Administration |
| Survey teachers on the celebration of student achievement used in the classroom/school. | Twice per year  | Celebrating Student Success Committee<br>Administration |
| Surveys distributed at school events.   | On-going  | Celebrating Student Success Committee<br>Administration |

## **7. How will you involve the SAC, the parents, the students and 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 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, share opinions, question and be kept current on the progress toward our goals. In addition, the School Advisory Council will be involved in preparing and reviewing the school's annual report on our school improvement goals.

At Seaside Elementary, teachers will come together to plan information nights to educate parents in the community of reading comprehension and math communication strategies. We will involve members of the community by inviting them to participate in events that support reading and math. A section in each monthly newsletter will be devoted to sharing information on literacy and math as it pertains to our goals.