

Sackville Centennial Elementary School



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

March 2009



Table of Contents

1. What are we doing well at <i>Sackville Centennial Elementary School</i> ?.....	page 3
2. What trends do we see in the data?.....	page 4
3. What challenges do we need to address in order to make the greatest difference in student achievement?	page 5
Fig. 1.1 Data Trends Supporting Literacy Goal, SCES.....	page 6
Fig. 1.2 HRSB Literacy Data.....	page 7
Fig. 2 Data Trends Supporting Mathematics Goal.....	page 8
4. Which areas have been identified as our goals for increasing student achievement?.....	page 9
5. What strategies and data will we use to achieve each goal?.....	page 10
Literacy Goal.....	page 10
Mathematics Goal.....	page 12
6. How will we involve the SAC, parents, students & community?.....	page 14

#1. What are we doing well at *Sackville Centennial Elementary School*?

Sackville Centennial is a small, well established school. We have a strong history of safe and inviting learning environments. Because our school is small, teachers and administration know all students by name. Peaceful, respectful behaviours are the norm, with exceptionally low incidences of Code of Conduct infractions. Older students assume responsibility for mentoring younger students. There are frequent cross grade groupings and combined classes. We have a very active PTA group, whose involvement greatly enhances enrichment opportunities that we are able to offer, as well as supplying a volunteer base to support student learning.

Our school has particularly focused upon developing good citizenship (EGL #2), through monthly assemblies recognizing desirable affective behaviours and through our selection of an “outstanding citizenship” student in our annual graduating grade six class. Our success in developing responsible, caring citizens is reflected in our scores in the high nineties in the HRSB survey indicators assessing how students like and feel safe at school, students feeling that they can do well at school, students learning about helping others at school and student appreciation of cultural diversity. The parent surveys show that parents feel most welcome at our school and also that they are kept well-informed of school activities and student achievement. We have a very high turnout at parent teacher interviews and at all school special events.

The DOE and HRSB literacy and mathematics assessments have generally yielded high scores in most areas. In the DOE Grade 6 Elementary Literacy Assessment, 93% of our students met the expectations for reading and writing. In the DOE Grade 3 Early Language Literacy Assessment, 100% of our students met the reading expectations. Similarly, in the DOE Grade 3 Early Elementary Math Literacy Assessment 100% of our students met or exceeded the expectations.



Math is seen in a positive way at our school, with 87% of parents indicating satisfaction with their child’s learning in math, 84% of students indicating that they like math and 96% of our students feeling that they are good in math. The data indicates that P-2 students are strong in number concepts, addition, measurement, geometry and spatial sense. In grades 3-6 students are strong in data management, probability, geometry and spatial sense.

Of worthy note is our improved achievement in reading fluency, a low scoring area in the HRSB Grade 2 literacy assessments in previous years. Last year we focused upon increasing our students’ reading fluency as our PFI goal. Our goal was achieved, as supported by our school- wide (3 terms) assessment and by the recently released 2008 Grade 2 literacy assessment results, which we scored **94%**, exceeding the Board average this year. ☺



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

Literacy Trends:

Overall, in most of the HRSB and DOE literacy assessments, our students are performing above grade level norms. Particularly in literacy, it was necessary to dig deeper into our data to find areas requiring improvement. In the HRSB Grade 2 Literacy Assessment our lowest scoring areas were in reading comprehension (GCO's 6 & 7). Similarly in the **CAT3** and **CAT4**, administered to Grades 4 and 5, our students' lowest scoring areas were in identifying central thought, comprehending media texts and inferring vocabulary meaning (GCO's 4, 6 & 7).



Family
Read a thon

This emerging trend of low achievement in reading comprehension prompted us to examine our informal classroom data on comprehension. We reviewed our last batch of reading records (Term 1, 2008), where teachers scored comprehension at the end of a running record. We found that although 64% of our student population achieved a 3 or a 4 (on the 4 point rubric, 4 being the highest score); this score actually reflected a surface level comprehension. As in the **CAT4**, our students were performing adequately on lower level comprehension questions. However, we now realize that our classroom assessments did not include “deeper comprehension”, the responding personally and critically to what had been read, upon which our students had performed so poorly in the **HRSB Grade 2 Literacy Assessments (Appendix A)** and in the **CAT3 and CAT4 Reading Assessments (Appendix H)**. As well, we now realize that our scoring criteria were inconsistent from teacher to teacher, and that common, definitive, comprehension assessment tools will need to be an essential component of our improvement plan.

In writing assessments, our lowest scoring area was in writing conventions, i.e. spelling, punctuation, basic sentence structure and paragraphing (GCO 10).

Mathematics Trends:

In the HRSB and DOE mathematics assessments, our students were competent or proficient in most areas. The Grade 2 **CAT3** (May 2007), **CAT3** (May 2008) and **CAT4** (October 2008) assessments have shown that our students are strong in the areas of number concepts, addition, measurement, geometry and spatial sense. The data shows that students had some difficulty in the areas of patterns, data management and probability. Trends over time show that students have had the greatest difficulty with subtraction. (**Appendix K**)

The Grade 5 **CAT3** (October 2007) and **CAT4** (October 2008) assessments have shown that our students are strong in data management, probability, geometry, spatial sense and patterns. The data shows that we need to monitor number concepts, measurement, addition, subtraction, and estimation. Our students had greatest difficulty in the areas of multiplication and division. (**Appendix L**)

The data collected through our **school wide assessments** supports this trend and also indicates a need to monitor our students' problem solving and communication skills. (**Appendix N**)



Family
Math
Night

Trends indicate the necessity for a goal in number operations (addition and subtraction in Grades P-3 and multiplication and division in Grades 4-6), with a focus on the reciprocal relationship of those operations.

Survey Trends:

As previously stated our surveys indicate a very high level of student, parent and teacher satisfaction in areas assessing feeling welcome and safe at school, implementation of the PSP and in meeting student academic needs.

Our slightly lower scoring areas were in student goal setting and in student self- assessment, and also in students' ability to apply their learning to real life situations.

We also scored lower in areas assessing ICT teaching and learning. Although we have made considerable progress (new computer lab, new computers in classrooms, new assistive technology hardware and software, teacher PD etc.), we still have much to accomplish.



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

In our recent review of all available data sources, we have concluded that our students are doing well in most areas, with some exceptions.

Literacy Challenges:

Of the **literacy** challenges we identified at this time (reading comprehension, writing organization and writing conventions), our staff decided that addressing reading comprehension would make the greatest difference in student literacy achievement.



Literacy data sources (see Fig. 1.1: “*Data Trends Supporting Literacy Goal*”), reviewed collaboratively as a staff, indicated that there was a need to **improve students’ ability to comprehend what they are reading, and to respond to texts personally and critically**. By strengthening our students’ ability to make connections, infer meaning, actively question text and synthesize all into a personal and critical understanding, our students will achieve deeper comprehension of fiction and non-fiction texts.

Our reading comprehension goal is also supported by extrapolating from the HRSB literacy data, which led to their selection of reading comprehension as a board wide literacy need (see Fig. 1.2 “*HRSB Literacy Data*”).

Data Trends Supporting Literacy Goal

Fig. 1.1, SCES LITERACY DATA:

DATA SOURCE	RESULTS
2008 HRSB Grade 2 Literacy Assessment, Reading, Responding Personally to Texts (GCO 6.1)	Only 56 % of our Grade 2 students were able to provide an “extended” level of response
2008 HRSB Grade 2 Literacy Assessment, Reading, Providing Support for Responses (GCO 6.2)	Only 19% of Grade 2 students were able to provide an “extended” support for their responses. (Board Average was 30%)
2007 HRSB Grade 2 Literacy Assessment, Reading, Providing Support for Responses (GCO 6.2)	53% of Grade 2 students were able to provide support for their responses. (Board Average was 73%)
2008 Grade 5 CAT4, Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 33 % of Grade 5 students scored “low” in “<i>comprehending media text</i>” - 25% of Grade 5 students scored “low” in “determining central thought” - 25% scored “low” in <i>using reading conventions to help understand what they are reading</i> (GCO 7) - 17% scored “low” in “<i>analysis of text graphics</i>” - Only 58% of students were “<i>competent</i>” in inferring meaning in “<i>general vocabulary</i>”.
2007 Grade 4 CAT3 , Reading (<i>Although the question items were slightly different from CAT3 to CAT4, both tests measure components of reading comprehension.</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 40% of students scored “low” in inferring meaning of words/phrases in context - 20% of students scored “low” in <i>determining central thought</i> - 40% of Grade 4 students scored “low” in “<i>analysis of text</i>” - Only 50% of Grade 4 students were “<i>competent</i>” in inferring meaning in “<i>general vocabulary</i>” - 30% of Grade 4 students were “low” in “<i>critical assessment</i>” of text read

Across formal and informal assessments of reading comprehension, we observe a trend for our students to score slightly lower in areas requiring application of the comprehension strategies (GCO 4), and their lowest scores were in the “deeper” comprehension questions (GCO’s 6 & 7). Increasing **reading comprehension** then is one of our major challenges.

Fig. 1.2, HRSB LITERACY DATA:

It is also useful to compare our scores with those of the Board averages, in the Grade 2 and Grade 9 Literacy testing. As indicated above, we have been scoring lower than the board averages in the areas assessing achievement of GCO's 6 & 7.

Although we do not have Grade 9 in our school, it is still useful to extrapolate from the Board's **Grade 9** data averages, to see trends in literacy learning.

2007-08 Grade 9 Literacy, "Personal Response / Text Support: Nonfiction (GCO 6.1a)	78%
2007-08 Grade 9 Literacy, "Personal Response / Text Support: Fiction (GCO 6.1b)	83%
2007-08 Grade 9 Text Features: Nonfiction (GCO 7.1a)	70%
2007-08 Text Features: Fiction (GCO 7.1b)	65%
2007-08 Personal / Text Connections: Nonfiction (GCO 7.2a)	80% (decreased since 2004 – 91%)
2007-08 Personal / Text Connections: Fiction (GCO 7.2b)	79%

Based upon the above Grade 9 results, the areas identified by the Board as requiring improvement, included:

- *"Identifying main ideas and supporting details in both fiction and non fiction texts.*
- *Concepts: using background knowledge and experience...*
- *Questioning: using background knowledge and personal experience to question and predict when reading fiction*
- *Personal Response / Text Support: responding personally to fiction and nonfiction and supporting thinking with evidence from the text*
- *Text Features: using text features...to enhance understanding of the text*
- *Personal / Text Connections: using background knowledge / experience to connect personally to the text in non fiction."*

(2007 – 2008 Literacy Assessment Results Document, Halifax Regional School Board,
<http://www.hrsb.ns.ca/content/id/689.html>)

Also of significance, the results of the HRSB Grade 8 Literacy testing, 2007 identified reading comprehension as a focus area:

*"Words / Phrases in context: understanding the meanings of words in text...
Next Steps...provide focused PD in the areas of reading comprehension..."*
(2007-2008 Grade 8 Literacy Assessment, Halifax Regional School Board,
<http://www.hrsb.ns.ca/files/Downloads/pdf/improve/assessments/gr8-literacy-07-08.pdf>)

Conclusion:

Both our school data and board data indicate that reading comprehension is a challenging skill for students. This is also corroborated by the professional research (see *"What Research Has to Say to the Teacher of Reading"* ed. J. Farstrup and S.J. Samuels, Newark, DE: International Reading Association.)

Mathematics Challenges:

The staff also reviewed the mathematics data (See Appendix O: “*Summary of Mathematics Data*”). Across all assessments and grade levels (DOE, HRSB and school wide), number operations stands out as the area upon which we need to focus our attention for instruction and assessment (See Fig. 2: “*Data Trends Supporting Mathematics Goal*”). This goal will positively affect all other strands of mathematics.

Through reviewing the data we identified areas to monitor, as well as areas that we need to focus upon for our goal. In grades P-3 we may want to monitor patterns. In Grades 4-6 we may want to monitor number concepts, basic operations (including addition and subtraction) and measurement. Data management and probability was a weakness in Grade 2 assessments and estimation was a weakness in Grade 5 assessments. We recognize that these areas need to be monitored but trends indicated multiplication and division as a priority in 4-6. We used school wide assessments to confirm that our students are indeed weak in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The data clearly indicates that our priority in Grades P-3 should be in addition and subtraction and in Grades 4-6 should be multiplication and division.

Data Trends Supporting Mathematics Goal

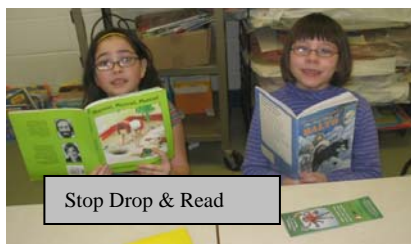
Fig. 2

DATA SOURCE	RESULTS
October 2007 HRSB Grade 5 CAT3 DIVIDE WHOLE NUMBERS	50% of Grade 5 students scored “ low ” in dividing whole numbers.
October 2008 HRSB Grade 5 CAT4 ADD & SUBTRACT WHOLE NUMBERS	54% of Grade 5 students scored “ low ” in adding and subtracting whole numbers.
October 2008 HRSB Grade 5 CAT4 MULTIPLY & DIVIDE WHOLE NUMBERS	69% of Grade 5 students scored “ low ” in multiplying and dividing whole numbers.
May 2007 HRSB Grade 2 CAT3 May 2008 HRSB Grade 2 CAT3	47% (2007) and 25% (2008) of Grade 2 students scored “ low ” in subtraction of whole numbers.
October 2008 HRSB Grade 2 CAT4	20% of Grade 2 students scored “ low ” in subtraction of whole numbers.
2007 – 2008 SCES School Wide Grade Level Math Assessment, Based upon Subtraction (P-3) and Division (4-6)	43% (Nov./07), 69% (May/08) students achieved a 3 or better on prior-grade math assessment.
2009 SCES, Grades 1-6, Number Operations Assessment	47% of Grades 1-6 students scored a 3 or a 4 (on a school created 4 point rubric) in meeting grade level number operations outcomes.
2009 SCES, Grades 1-6, Number Sense Assessment	50% of Grades 1-6 students scored a 3 or a 4 (on a school created 4 point rubric) in meeting grade level number sense outcomes.

#4. Based upon these challenges, which areas have been identified as our goals for increasing student achievement?

Literacy:

Applying comprehension strategies to truly understand what is being read, not merely decoding, is a life skill. Students require a range of strategies to help them understand what they read. Throughout their education and ongoing into their adult life they will need to acquire knowledge, become informed consumers, and be insightful readers, in a variety of circumstances. Our job is to help students read and think about their texts in meaningful ways that help them develop personal and critical understanding of their local and global world.



Increased reading comprehension will also have positive side effects in student writing achievement, facilitating student production of more thoughtful writing pieces. Improved comprehension will influence our students' mathematical thinking as well. Reading comprehension is required to determine the main idea (i.e. operation required), infer meaning and synthesize all information in mathematical problem solving.

Thus, we feel that our goal of increasing **reading comprehension** will have the greatest impact upon our students' lives.

Mathematics:

In mathematics, our students' scores in number operations were consistently low across all grade levels. Focusing upon **number operations** and their reciprocal nature will yield the greatest increase in our students' mathematics achievement. **Addition and subtraction** have been identified as the areas of greatest need in Grades P-3, and **multiplication and division** as the areas of greatest need in Grades 4-6.



Improvement in these basic operations will establish a strong number sense foundation which our students can apply in problem solving and in communication of mathematical concepts.

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



Goal # 1: **Literacy**

Every student will demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension.

A) Implementation strategies:

- Teachers will implement the Reading Workshop model in their classrooms on a daily basis.
- Teachers will have a common understanding of how to administer the PM Benchmark Assessment Kit and the AYR Assessment Kit.
- Teachers will extend comprehension strategies across subject areas.
- Teachers will develop a systematic process of intervention to ensure that students receive additional time and support when they experience difficulty.
- Teachers will share comprehension strategies with parents.



B) Professional learning to facilitate achievement of literacy goal:

Professional Development	Expected staff learning from engagement in literacy professional development
Reading Workshop Model as outlined in the DOE Teaching in Action document	All teachers will implement this model in their classrooms
Development of comprehension strategies- P-3 Miller: <i>Reading With Meaning</i> 4-6 Harvey & Goudvis: <i>Strategies That Work</i>	Teachers will develop best practice and developmentally appropriate lessons on each of the comprehension strategies

The PM Benchmark and AYR Assessment Kits	Consistent application of tool across the grade levels
Meet in grade clustered PLC's to share and discuss the various classrooms strategies that have or have not worked	Share best practice and further individual understandings
Meet in our PLC's to analyze comprehension skills data.	Teachers will determine which skills require more explicit teaching, and develop additional lessons.
Literacy Team to organize Comprehension Strategies Resource Centre	Literacy Team will organize a teacher resource centre to support the teaching of the comprehension strategies. Children's literature titles will be organized into baskets for teaching each strategy.

C) Data Sources (to measure achievement of literacy goal):

Data Source	Time Frame	Data Collection Responsibility
Grade 2 HRSB Literacy Testing	Fall 2009	HRSB/Administration
Reading Workshop Records & Conferences, Reading Responses, Journals, Writer's Notebooks, Sticky Notes, Book Talk etc. (will vary from P-6)	Bimonthly	SCES Classroom Teachers
Grade 5 Literacy – Reading Assessments (CAT4)	Fall 2009	HRSB/Administration
Grade 3 Literacy Assessment (ELLA)	Fall 2009	DOE/Administration
Grade 6 Literacy Assessment (ELA)	Fall 2009	DOE/Administration
Reading Records (PM Benchmarks & AYR kit)	Terms 1, 2 & 3	SCES Teachers





Goal # 2: **Mathematics**

Every student will demonstrate improved skill with math facts and related computational strategies.

A) Implementation strategies

- Teachers will continue to use ongoing formative classroom assessments (interviews, observations, weekly quizzes, etc) to help them plan and track their teaching.
- Teachers will create a cross grade curriculum map of math facts strategies which will be posted and referenced continuously by teachers and students.
- Teachers will implement best practices in teaching math facts strategies in their classrooms. (i.e. the math facts 3 part lesson plan and the D.O.E. computational mental math booklets).
- Staff will use the manipulatives that work well with teaching specific math facts strategies.
- In grade clustered PLC's we will share assessments and strategies that have worked well and discuss next steps.
- Teachers will develop a systematic process of intervention to ensure that students receive additional time and support when they experience difficulty.



B) Professional learning to facilitate achievement of mathematics goal:



Professional Development	Expected staff learning from engagement in numeracy professional development
Examine the DOE <i>Computational Mental Math Booklet</i> as it relates to math facts	Teachers will gain expertise in teaching the use of mental math strategies for math facts
Math professional development on the three part lesson approach to teaching math facts	Teachers will develop confidence in using this instructional strategy
Meet in grade clustered PLC's to share and discuss the various classrooms strategies that have or have not worked	Share best practice and further individual understandings
A PLC to examine related resources such as <i>Think Addition / Subtraction / Multiplication / Division, Van De Walle</i>	Continue to refine best practices
Professional development on the use of manipulatives to support the instruction of math facts	Teachers will use manipulatives in their classrooms to support the introduction and development of math facts strategies

C) Data Sources (to measure achievement of mathematics goal)

Data Source	Time Frame	Data Collection Responsibility
Weekly classroom assessments on math facts and monthly data collections	Weekly/monthly	SCES Classroom Teachers
Grade 2 CAT4	Once/year	HRSB/Administration
Grade 3 EEMLA	Once/year	DOE/Administration
Grade 5 CAT4	Once/year	HRSB/Administration

#6. How will we involve the SAC, parents, students and community?

Our school plan for improvement, including accreditation timelines, will be posted on the school website. A hard copy of our “*Annual Report*”, which outlines our plan for improvement, will be sent home with every student in October. Teachers will discuss our goals with students and encourage them to follow up with goals discussions at home. PFI updates will continue to be a regular feature in school newsletters. Our monthly school newsletter will include math / literacy “home links” activities that families may do to reinforce the goals at home

As in the past, we will provide the SAC with PFI updates at our monthly meetings, highlighting data trends and goal implementation steps. The SAC and SAC-created focus groups have participated in each step of the accreditation process. We will continue with these formats, as well as posting the minutes of these meetings in the school and on our school website.

Every fall our school’s updated Plan for Communicating Student Learning is sent home to each family. This year, as part of our fall curriculum Open House, we will also provide parents with a brief overview of our PFI plan before they visit classrooms to receive information on grade level outcomes.

Regional, provincial, and in school assessment results summaries will be shared with parents as they become available. Parents are also encouraged to complete the annual planning for improvement surveys (incentives for returning survey are offered), and will be provided with a summary of the survey results. We will ask our SAC and PTA groups to review the indicators around parental involvement, communication and school climate.

We will continue to highlight student achievement through our annual school events, including Open House, Christmas Concert, Math Night, Family Literacy Month (includes community authors and performers), Student Variety Show and our monthly High Five assemblies. Parent participation in these activities is very high.



