



ST. STEPHEN'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

St. Stephen's Elementary School (SSES) has a wondrous and unique history. It was built on a cranberry bog, near the community of Africville in 1948. Our enrollment is 216 students from grades primary to six. St. Stephen's Elementary is located in the north end of Halifax and is viewed as the 'hidden gem'. Our school reflects the diverse socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of our community. This diversity lends itself to a rich school climate. Our school is increasingly representative of the global community and we are constantly striving to enhance our student body's awareness and acceptance of all individuals.

Our school mission statement reads; "St. Stephen's is committed to being a safe, peaceful and nurturing community, where mutual respect among adults and students is practiced, in which all students can develop their intellectual, social, emotional, physical and creative potential in preparation for lifelong learning and success". Staff and students hold this mission statement in high regard and put it into practice on a daily basis.

We continue to work towards maintaining our high quality education through the various initiatives put in place by the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB). As you read though our '*Plan for Improvement*', you will see how our pride, hard work and determination are the premise of our many successes.

1. What are we doing well?

The entire staff and SAC at St. Stephen's have been involved in the PFI process. We are encouraged by the evidence of continued and sustainable academic achievement as measured by the data collected and referenced in the school self-assessment. Through the self-assessment process, the staff and School Advisory Council at St. Stephen's Elementary School (SSES) have identified a number of areas of success that indicate positive practices that are in place and that these practices are supporting growth in student achievement.

Following is a reflection on some of our identified areas of success based on evidence noted in our self assessment and some consideration as to why these areas have been successful.

Instructional time at SSES is highly valued and preserved to the best of our ability and circumstances. Through a combination of school-wide PEBS initiatives and an efficient and effective School Planning Team that ensures detailed academic and behaviour supports are in place, we have worked to minimize disruptions. We believe that our focus on instructional time and adherence to the *Time to Learn* document has had a positive impact on student achievement.

Overall, St. Stephen's has a very calm and gentle climate. Office referrals and suspension rates have decreased dramatically over the past few years. PEBS, Gotcha's, monthly Stars Assemblies, implementation of the 'bucket filling theme', peer mediation and the grade six leadership program have been successful in assisting students manage their behaviour, think about individual choices and recognize the expectations of the school wide matrix. 'PEBS reminders' and 'bucket filling themes' are part of the daily morning announcements. Teachers are recognizing and rewarding positive behaviour and attitudes and our 'gotcha buckets' continue to fill each week.

Staff at St. Stephen's takes advantage of various professional development opportunities as well as the support of various specialists such as our math coach and literacy coach. Our literacy and math coaches take an active role in providing ongoing professional and curriculum development. This in turn, assists our staff to be current in instructional practices and philosophies that supports time on task, effective teaching and appropriate assessment and evaluation.

Organization of resource materials at the school further supports our efforts to be effective in the areas of curriculum development and curriculum delivery. All our math resources are stored in a central resource area and a large number of teaching resources along with curriculum guides are housed in a dedicated section of our library. All teaching staff has access to these materials through effective borrowing systems. Also, in support of school-based resources, all book bureau purchases are

viewed and discussed through the school planning for improvement team in order to ensure that purchases are aligned with curriculum and the goals of our school plan.

In the area of assessment and evaluation and general student success, we have developed an effective School Planning Team referral system and have developed assessment tools that are utilized in both the areas of literacy and math. Reading assessments of all students are conducted regularly in all classrooms. We also conduct school wide, grade level reading assessments on every student in our school three times per year. The results are documented on a template that was devised by the literacy committee and students are formally tracked as they progress through the grades. In the area of math, grade level common assessments have been devised and these are given to students as a pre and a post test. Much like the school wide reading assessments, the results are documented on a template that was devised by the math committee and students are formally tracked.* ADD student portfolio information/student let conferences

As a school community we are working hard to continually improve our learning environment. During the 2007-2008 school year we received a 4C's grant which allowed for the building of an outdoor classroom. We continue to foster our natural environment, including our cranberry bog, and we have formed a partnership with the Department of National Defence (DND), along with a school greening committee and gardening club where we hold fall and spring school grounds clean up and planting days.

In 2008-2009 a playground committee was formed and along with a dedicated SAC and PTA several grants were obtained and two new playgrounds were built at St. Stephen's. Also in the spring of 2009, a Toyota Evergreen grant was awarded and St. Stephen's now has two of its very own gardens where last year a harvest of lettuce, carrots and tomatoes were enjoyed.

Another 4C's grant was awarded to St. Stephen's during the 2009-2010 school year and along with a partnership and tremendous support from our neighbours at the Nova Scotia Community College, a school community kitchen was built. This serves several functions with the most important being that of supporting healthy lifestyles. We currently run a very successful 'Snacks for Stars' healthy eating program as well as a grab and go breakfast program. Several classes use the kitchen to support curriculum, particularly in the areas of literacy, math and science and our learning centre is able to provide much needed life skills.

St. Stephen's boasts a strong group of teachers, support staff, parents and guardians and our custodial staff does an outstanding job of keeping our school in pristine condition. Our daytime custodian takes great pride in maintaining a safe and very clean building.

In addition to the academic programs that are available to our students, we also provide a variety of other extracurricular activities such as grade six leadership, band, strings, peer mediation, playground activity leaders (PALS), intramurals, badminton club, skipping club, choir, theatre arts and gardening club. Our students have opportunities to attend various field trips, regional track meets and cross country events. As well, with the building of our St. Stephen's outdoor classroom and community kitchen our students have been part of the experience of 4C's grants.

The work that the SAC and PTA have done to support the PFI process is invaluable. All discussions at the SAC level revolve around improvement in student achievement. The SAC meets on a monthly basis and have allowed for the communication and review of data which has led to initiatives that support student achievement such as our volunteer reading program. Our PTA focuses all of its attention on fundraising to support initiatives that will in turn support our planning for improvement goals.

2. What trends do you see in the data?

Upon review of our various sources of data and in completing the work on our self assessment we have identified the following trends:

Literacy:

The first of these trends is an overall improvement in reading for our grade two students particularly in the areas of active questioning and personal response to text. Even though accuracy and fluency appear to be strong compared to HRSB results, they continue to be one of the lower areas in our grade two results. Reading habits at home, supporting their responses and supporting their questions were low.

Students on average do well on the ELLA grade three assessments. The writing portion of this assessment has been consistently strong in the area of expository writing. There was just one year (07-08) where our results were low in narrative writing. From 2007-2010, it is noted that this assessment shows a significant drop in the percentage of students who met expectations in reading and listening overall.

Through careful examination of our grade five CAT 4 assessments, results indicate that our students are doing well overall particularly in the area of reading and vocabulary. This assessment also indicated challenges in the sub categories around analysis of text and central thought.

Students on average do well on the ELA grade six assessments. An improvement in writing was noted from 2007-2010. It is apparent that reading has been consistently lower than writing and has declined slightly over the last three years.

Math:

CAT 4 grade two assessment results demonstrate that we are achieving or exceeding in the areas of number concepts, data management and geometry. Since 2006-2007, results, particularly in the area of subtraction, have decreased.

The grade three EEMLA results from 2006-2009 indicate that the majority of students show some evidence (C2) and less than half the students show strong evidence (C3) of the five representations within communication.

CAT 4 grade five assessment results demonstrate that our areas of strength are number sense, geometry and data management. Overall, our areas of challenge include addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers as well as estimation and number operations.

Other trends noted include:

- The student survey and assessment results indicate that student engagement in math is low and continues to be an area of challenge.
- School based assessments demonstrate a drop in computation skills from the early grades to the upper grades.
- School based assessments and board wide and provincial data are in agreement.
- Our student survey from 2006-2008 indicates a decrease in the number of students who report that they like math.
- Our strengths and challenges have not changed significantly from 06-09.

Assessment & Evaluation:

According to our survey, more parents feel they are better informed of their child's progress and how they are evaluated. Our survey results indicate that the percentage of our teachers who teach students to assess the quality of their work has increased to 100%. As well, the percentage of teachers who use assessment to inform their instruction is consistently high. The percentage of parents/guardians who indicate that they understand how their child is being evaluated has increased over time.

Safe and Inviting Learning Environments and Student Achievement:

An analysis of our PEBS data binder shows a decrease in office referrals, in school alternate placements and out of school suspensions.

Our survey indicates that parents/guardians and teachers see St. Stephen's as a safe and inviting school.

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

In response to our school self assessment, survey results, external assessments as well as common school assessments we have determined that our school improvement plan will focus on comprehension in literacy and on operation sense in numeracy. This focus will make the greatest difference in student achievement.

In terms of literacy development, our data indicates the improvements that will make the greatest difference in student achievement at SSES include reading comprehension, accuracy and fluency.

In terms of math, our data indicates the improvements that will make the greatest difference in student achievement at SSES include number operation and estimation.

Other challenges have been identified that we recognize as important and as areas that we want to continue to address in our school.

- Maintain and continue to build on a safe and welcoming learning environment. We have successfully established Positive Effective Behaviour Supports. Our school wide bucket filling program, Gotcha's and Fantastic Friday phone calls have proven very beneficial in increasing positive student behaviours. Our behaviour matrix is reviewed and taught throughout the school, daily PEBS messages are discussed and part of daily announcements. We have seen a significant decrease in office referrals and suspensions. Our school has a positive climate which is built on respect for self, others, learning and the environment. This challenge is being successfully addressed however, we feel it important to highlight that our initiatives in this area will continue.

- Continue to build on the work started through our Professional Learning Communities. PLC's will continue to develop a common understanding of the key reading comprehension strategies and math strategies for teaching

operations and refine common assessments. We would like PLC's to gain a better understanding of how to deconstruct the data from both external and school based assessments. PLC's will use this information to inform their instruction and improve student learning through the development of common lesson plans, common marking sessions and common practice.

- Maintain and continue to improve communication to students and parents/guardians about student progress and how student work is assessed. Our focus will remain on assisting students and parents/guardians to gain a better understanding of assessment and evaluation.
- Provide staff with more RCH professional development along with the appropriate tools needed for bias evaluation. Our focus will remain on developing a better understanding of the RCH guidelines for bias evaluation when selecting learning materials.
- Ensure that our school has the necessary technology available to students. Our focus will remain on supporting students in the use of different types of technology to communicate and enhance their learning.

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

Math Goal:

Students will demonstrate improvement in number operations . . .

Students in grades P-2 will demonstrate improvement in addition and subtraction.

Students in grades 3-6 will demonstrate improvement in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Literacy Goal:

Students will demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension . . .

Students in grades P-2 will demonstrate improvement in accuracy, fluency and comprehension through the development of effective reading strategies.

Students in grades 3 – 6 will improve reading comprehension in text representing a variety of genres with a focus on non-fiction text.

Planning for Improvement Question 5 – What strategies and data will you use to achieve each goal?

Use the following format in your final response to Question 5:

<p>Goal : Students will demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension . . .</p> <p>Students in grades P-2 will demonstrate improvement in accuracy, fluency and comprehension through the development of effective reading strategies.</p> <p>Students in grades 3 – 6 will improve reading comprehension in text representing a variety of genres with a focus on non-fiction text.</p>	
<p>Strategies to achieve the goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will develop a common understanding of the comprehension strategies. • Teachers will implement the reading workshop model in their classrooms on a daily basis to explicitly teach each comprehension strategies (making connections, asking questions, and develop the ability to support their thinking). • Teachers will provide formal and informal assessments, monitor comprehension, plan instruction and follow up on the strategy taught. • Teachers will use picture books and read alouds to model comprehension strategies. 	
<p>Professional development to support achievement of the goal:</p>	
<p>Staff will learn (knowledge, skills, and professional practices)?</p>	<p>Learning Environment</p> <p>How will the learning take place (ex. PLCs, PD, time with coach, etc.)?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will gain a greater understanding of English Language Arts outcome development from primary to six. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC - Teachers will review curriculum outcomes and develop an overview of progression of the reading stages and key reading comprehension strategies from grade primary to six. <p><u>Good Choice</u>, Tony Stead (p.96)</p> <p><u>Reality Checks</u>, Tony Stead (p. 9 & 10)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will develop their individual understanding of comprehension strategies through collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC - Teachers will engage in further learning and discussions around topics of accuracy, fluency, questioning, connections, and assisting students in supporting their thinking. • School-Based PD - Teachers will attend literacy cafés focusing on questioning, inferring, visualizing, making connections, synthesizing, critical literacy, and monitoring comprehension.

	<p>Grades P-2 with a particular focus on predicting, meaning/structure/visual (MSV), and confirming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC- Teachers will engage in common marking sessions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will develop a common understanding of the components of readers workshop, how to implement readers workshop in the classroom, and share experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD with literacy coach (specific to workshop framework) <p><u>That Workshop Book</u>, by Samantha Bennett <u>Growing Readers</u>, by Kathy Collins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC to discuss and share success in their classrooms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will learn how to create developmentally appropriate lessons on key reading comprehension strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD (in class with coach) using professional readings from a variety of resources selected by the literacy coach. • Teachers will use <u>Good Choice</u>, by Tony Stead & <u>Reality Check</u>, by Tony Stead as anchor resources through Book Clubs, PLC's, and individual professional learning. • PLC- Teachers will engage in common marking sessions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will learn how to use common assessments (running records, oral reading records, conference notes, etc.) to inform instruction and improve student learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC - Teachers will have time with the literacy coach to learn how to administer comprehension assessments in a consistent manner. • PLC – teachers will review classroom assessments to inform instruction. • P-2 teachers will use the PM Benchmark Assessment Binder to assess reading levels. • 3-6 teachers will use the AYR Kit to assess reading levels. • PLC- Teachers will engage in common marking sessions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will learn effective use of read aloud in teaching comprehension strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD with literacy coach (literacy cafes, modeling in class, etc.). <p><u>The Value of Read Aloud</u>, by Frank Serafini <u>Lessons in Comprehension</u>, by Frank Sarafini</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC – sharing of resources, lessons, successes, etc.

Data sources:

What data will you collect?	When will you collect the data?	Who will be responsible for collecting the data?
St. Stephen's Classroom Reading Assessments	Sept (for formative assessment and PFI baseline data) Throughout the year for formative assessment June (for formative assessment and PFI year end data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Classroom Teachers- Administration- School based data support staff
HRSB grade two literacy assessment	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Literacy Coach-Grade Two Teachers-Administration
HRSB grade five CAT 4 level 14	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- HRSB- Classroom teacher- Administration- School Assessment Coordinator
DOE ELA (grade 6)	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- DOE- Classroom teacher- Administration- School Assessment Coordinator
DOE ELLA (grade 3)	late September / early October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- DOE- Classroom teacher- Administration- School Assessment Coordinator
St. Stephen's Elementary School IPP Annual Outcome Tracking Sheet.	End of Term 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Classroom teacher- Administration- Resource teacher- Learning Centre teacher

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

The planning for improvement process is at the heart of all discussions at St. Stephen's Elementary School, including, but not limited to staff meetings, School Advisory meetings, Parent Teacher Association meetings, Comprehensive Guidance Advisory Committee meetings, School based committee meetings including PEBS and Professional Learning Community meetings.

The St. Stephen's School Advisory Committee has been involved in every step of the PFI/Accreditation process to date and has played an integral role in looking at and responding critically to the school improvement plan, the school self assessment and data. The SAC is representative of the community and the administrative team collaborates with the SAC chair on the agenda via email. At each SAC meeting an update on the PFI/Accreditation process is provided which includes progress with the self assessment and data collection. The SAC has been informed of developments and all important decisions and documents have been reviewed and discussed. We regularly discuss results from the DOE, HRSB, and school based assessments. The SAC members have been asked for input as we developed our goals and we have discussed in greater detail, specific questions from the HRSB survey with respect to parent/community involvement and safe and inviting learning environments. Members of our SAC attended the HRSB in-service on the PFI process. As we move forward with the implementation of our plan the Planning for Improvement team will report regularly to the SAC. In addition, we will continue to engage our SAC in accountability discussions that are well grounded in shared and comprehensible data.

Our St. Stephen's Parent Teacher Association has as its main focus to fundraise and provide volunteer support to address areas of need identified in our self-assessment. This, in turn, has lent itself to significant purchasing of resources, special events presentations and volunteerism which supports literacy and math directly.

St. Stephen's parents/guardians have been involved in the PFI/Accreditation process through their responses to the HRSB survey, communication via monthly newsletters, attendance at curriculum night, viewing of our St. Stephen's website and attending parent/teacher meetings. Staff continues to communicate information about PFI to parents/guardians through a variety of means including curriculum night presentations, classroom newsletters, parent/teacher meetings, written and oral communication about assessment results and report cards.

St. Stephen's students are also involved in the PFI/Accreditation process through their responses to the HRSB survey, their involvement in the assessments, school assemblies, and classroom discussions and in becoming familiar with our school website. Our students will become aware of our improvement plan through their

continued participation in literacy and math learning including our various activities that form a part of our tracking and monitoring strategies. Students are involved in goal setting, creation of individual portfolios and are informed of their individual results on various assessments.

The St. Stephen's wider community continues to become familiar with the PFI/Accreditation process and has a number of means by which to do so. We currently have two community members who are on our SAC and who dialogue with the wider community. In addition, the wider community has access to information through our website and it is communicated that all special events such as our math and literacy nights are open to the entire community.