

Bicentennial School



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School and Community Context

The idea of a new Junior High School in Dartmouth was conceived in 1950 during the year of Dartmouth's 200th year anniversary. Aptly named Bicentennial, the school opened in 1951. In 1980, the Elementary portion of Bicentennial School was opened to serve the then overcrowded Crichton Park and Hawthorn Schools. In time geographic boundaries changed with the closing of Notting Park and Northbrook Schools. Today, our elementary feeder schools for our junior high student body are Crichton Park School, Hawthorn School (within boundaries), and Bicentennial Elementary. Over the past six years our community has experienced a sharp decline in student enrollment (from over 500 students in 2003 to approximately 270 in 2009).

Bicentennial School is rich with diversity. Not only is there racial and ethnic diversity among our students

and staff, but there is also diversity in our interests. We offer over 30 clubs, teams and activities for students of all grade levels in athletics, the arts, cultural groups and other extra curricular interests.

This year we are proud to offer a lunch supervision program for students from grades P-9. Our students also have the opportunity to participate in instrumental music from Grades 6-9 and an enhanced Physical Education program helps to promote a healthy active lifestyle.

All members of our school community work hard to ensure a positive and welcoming school environment where student success is the focus. Our staff is dedicated to meeting the needs of all our learners by building positive relationships. Our plan to improve student achievement is outlined on the last page of this report.



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Family and Community Involvement

Consistently since 2006, 90% of parents surveyed agreed that they feel welcomed at Bicentennial School. When they are able to help with school activities and events, 80% feel appreciated by our school staff. In addition, the majority (83%) of members of the community feel that the school effectively promotes events that involve families and the community. As a school we will continue to work together with the community to develop ways to involve families and the community in our school learning environment.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Our survey results over the past few years have shown consistent improvement in how safe our students feel at school. Results for 2009 indicate that 85% of students feel they are treated equally and are respected in their learning environment. This is an improvement from 2006 where the results indicated 78%. This steady improvement is due to the number of programs offered within the school that make students feel a

part of the school community. This past year, an improvement of 40% was reported in regards to the reduction of various interruptions in student learning. This improvement is due in part to effective classroom management, and reinforcement of positive behaviour support systems. Our lunch time will provide opportunities for students to engage in additional learning experiences.

Provincial and Board Assessment Results

Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) students participated in provincial and board-wide assessments. The information gained through these assessments will help us determine our next steps in improving student achievement in literacy and mathematics. Please note that the percentages used throughout this report are rounded to the nearest whole number.

* French Immersion students completed the assessment in French.

Literacy Assessments	School Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations	Board Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations
Grade 2 Board	English Reading Accurately: 55% English Reading Fluently: 45%	English Reading Accurately: 74% English Reading Fluently: 67%
Grade 3 Provincial	Reading: 55% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 64% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 73%	Reading: 81% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%
Grade 5 Board	Reading: 38%	Reading: 81%
Grade 6 Provincial	Reading: 86% Writing: 100%	Reading: 88% Writing: 94%
Grade 8 Board	Reading: 91%	Reading: 81%
Grade 9 Provincial	Reading: 95% Writing: 99%	Reading: 84% Writing: 96%
Math Assessments	School Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations	Board Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations
Grade 2 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 55%	Mathematics Concepts: 95%
Grade 3 Provincial	Mathematics Concepts: 46%	Mathematics Concepts: 71%
Grade 5 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 62%	Mathematics Concepts: 84%
Grade 8 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 74%	Mathematics Concepts: 72%

At Bicentennial School we are pleased to report that most of our students performed well in writing in the Halifax Regional School Board and Department of Education literacy assessments (administered in grades 5, 6, 8, and 9). Students in grades 6 – 9 also excel in reading assessments. However, the percentage of our students meeting expectations for reading in elementary (administered in grades 2, 3, and 5) are below average. It is important to note that our small class sizes do not report well in percentages. At Bicentennial we have made reading comprehension our focus for improvement. Our percentage of students meeting expectations in math assessments in Junior High is slightly above HRSB results, though it is significantly below in grades 2, 3, and 5. Our teachers have been learning about effective teaching in these areas and our students will improve.

Classroom Assessment

Focus on Reading: Teachers assessed students' reading comprehension in October to identify areas of strength and areas requiring additional instruction. These results revealed that Junior High students were strong in re-telling information, and needed further support with questioning. The elementary students also showed strength in re-telling and needed further support with inferring and connecting. May results confirmed that Junior High questioning increased by 13%, elementary connecting improved by 10% and inferring improved by 5%.

Focus on math communication: In October, teachers assessed students' mathematical thinking to identify areas of strength and areas requiring additional instruction. Teachers looked at students' ability to use models, pictures, symbols, and words when solving math problems. The October results revealed that most students, in both Elementary and Junior High, were able to understand the math questions asked, however they needed more instruction using pictures, numbers, symbols and words to explain their thinking. The May results showed overall growth in all three areas.



Student Engagement

At Bicentennial School, students are engaged in learning and co-curricular activities. We have a variety of clubs and teams in which a high percentage of students participate. In addition to involvement in sports, intramurals and clubs, survey results indicate school subjects are challenging, understandable, and students feel confident in their academic abilities. We are proud to say that last year a number of activities such as skipping, running and dance clubs were available for elementary students. We recognize that in a P-9 school it is challenging to find time and space to offer age-appropriate activities for all students. We will work hard to be up to the challenge.

Time to Learn

Bicentennial School follows the 'time to learn' requirements set by the Department of Education - courses have required/recommended number of minutes. It was noted at the junior high level that 60 minute classes optimized student learning and time-on-task. As well, initial survey results indicated student learning was being interrupted by school announcements. As a result, we reduced the number of announcements during the school day and installed 'voice over internet' telephones in every classroom. The most recent survey showed improvement with only 31% of students and teachers indicating student learning was interrupted by announcements.

Professional Development

When teachers learn, students learn. Teachers at Bicentennial are actively involved in professional development on an ongoing basis. Our literacy and math coaches help teachers regularly to incorporate effective teaching strategies. This year our school based days with staff focused on designing our school plan for improvement. Teachers also learned best practices and fair assessment strategies where common rubrics were developed to help assess student work. Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) were implemented into Junior High Math and English Language Art teachers' timetables. These teachers dedicated much of their PLC learning opportunity to studying data to optimize positive student achievement. PLC's also provided opportunities for teachers to grow professionally through online resources such as 'PD360'. Additionally, all teachers regularly attended professional development (PD) opportunities provided by the Halifax Regional School Board and the Department of Education.

Additional School Supports

At Bicentennial School we have a number of school supports to improve student achievement:

- English as a Second Language teacher
- speech and language pathologist
- learning center teacher
- elementary resource teacher
- jr. high resource teacher
- African Nova Scotian student support worker
- school social worker
- police liaison officer
- student support teacher
- guidance counsellor
- educational program assistant
- Reading Recovery teacher
- math coach
- literacy coach
- school psychologist
- literacy support teacher
- library support specialist
- study hall
- math and literacy mentors



Planning for Improvement

The school community of Bicentennial School takes great pride in our students' success. There is much to celebrate here at our school! However, we also know that we can do even better. We are very dedicated to demonstrating our continued improvement. The Halifax Regional School Board's Planning for Improvement process helps us to identify what our students are doing well, and what areas need further attention and improvement.

Our school staff have chosen goals in the areas of literacy and mathematics. We have discovered from looking at student achievement data that our students could benefit from a focus on reading. We want our students to be better able to apply reading strategies when reading non-fiction. This is an important skill that will affect their ability to suc-

ceed in any subject. In mathematics we are focusing our school improvement efforts on improving our students' ability to communicate their thinking and understanding when solving problems. Again, this is a skill that will benefit them no matter what their future holds.

We proudly present Bicentennial's school improvement plan for your information. You will find additional details about action steps teachers will be focusing on with their students in class and also what teachers will be learning themselves (PD) to make achievement of our school goals a reality for the students of Bicentennial at our website:

www.bicentennial.ednet.ns.ca.

School Goals

Literacy Goal

Our students will demonstrate increased comprehension in non-fiction reading.

Strategies:

1. Implement best practices in literacy instruction in all classrooms
 - PD in reading strategies for all teachers
 - Teachers model reading strategies in all subject areas
 - Incorporate Anchor Reading activities in all Content areas
2. Formally and informally assess students' reading comprehension (non-fiction)
 - PD on informal assessment practices
 - Create students' personal assessment tracking sheet for reading comprehension
 - Use tracking sheet to help inform instruction
3. Establish co-curricular experiences for all students
 - Involve students in co-curricular activities
 - Continue and extend reading buddy/literacy mentor programs in grades primary and nine.

Math Goal

Students will demonstrate an increased ability to communicate mathematically when problem solving.

Strategies:

- The school staff will implement strategies and provide opportunity that will increase students' ability to communicate mathematically. These strategies will be monitored daily, monthly, and yearly to ensure student success.
1. Implement best practices in mathematics in all classrooms
 - PD in how to differentiate math instruction
 - Teachers model strategies for communicating mathematically through reading and writing.
 2. Formally and informally assess students' ability to communicate mathematical concepts through reading and writing
 - PD on informal assessment practices
 - Create students' personal assessment tracking sheet for problem solving
 - Use tracking sheet to help inform instruction

3. Establish math co-curricular experiences for all students

- Involve students in co-curricular activities
- Continue and extend math buddy/mentor programs.

One significant strategy that we found to be most promising last year was the implementation of best practices in literacy instruction in all classrooms. This one strategy, where all teachers were talking about literacy comprehension in all content areas, significantly improved both the students' and teachers' understanding of reading strategies and positively impacted student performance in mathematical communication.

This year at Bicentennial we will continue to formally and informally assess students' reading comprehension in non-fiction and assess students' ability to communicate mathematical concepts through reading and writing.

The school looks forward to continuing its plan to meet students' needs and improve student achievement.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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