

Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Elementary



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School and Community Context

Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Elementary (BLT) has served the 3 suburban communities just outside of the city of Halifax since the school opened in 1973. Originally designed and used as a Junior High School, later a second building was added in 1991. The school now offers programming for grades primary to five with an English program and an early French Immersion program. The school has a population of 750 students and a staff of over 60 people. The school student population has remained fairly steady for the past 5 years. BLT is the largest elementary school in Nova Scotia.

Strong community relations are essential to the everyday functioning of a school. At BLT we recognize that parental involvement, both in the school and at home, promotes a vital link for supporting student learning. Efforts are made to arrange school events to encourage the high-

est level of turn out. Ninety-seven percent of parents responding to the 2008-09 HRSB survey felt the school encourages parent and community involvement. Many school events focus on curriculum, learning and student achievement. Ice cream social/curriculum night, town halls, assemblies, concerts, drama performances, field days, are school-wide events that invite parents' participation.

School events are communicated to the parents via newsletters and websites, both at the classroom and school level. Tips are often provided to help parents assist their child in learning. Ninety-six percent of parents reported they received information about what their child would be learning during the year. A community message board was established along the St. Margaret's Bay Road to communicate school messages as well.

Safe and Orderly Environment

The survey results collected from parents, teachers and students since 2004 have consistently indicated that our students feel safe. Ninety-seven percent of students on the BLT student survey felt the adults in the school cared about them. Ninety-six percent of staff and parents felt the school is a safe place. Students and parents are aware of our expectations for a safe and orderly environment. Our school uses Positive Effec-

tive Behaviour Supports (PEBS) such as GRINS and Fantastic Phone Calls. The Code of Conduct and the PEBS Matrix are both found in the student agendas and classrooms. Through in-servicing, teachers will continue to develop their understanding of how to best promote positive student behaviour within all areas of the school. We are also looking at ways to provide more student leadership between the two buildings.



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Family and Community Involvement

We are doing a really great job of involving parents and the community within our school. Ninety-seven percent of parents/ guardians feel welcomed in our school. When the parents help out in the classroom or school 92% feel appreciated by the school staff. We have active PTC and SAC organizations. Parent volunteers help in the classrooms, reading programs, library, field trips, fundraisers, concerts, field days, and others. Without the volunteers many of these activities would not be possible.

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: 68%	English Reading Accurately: 74%
	English Reading Fluently: 77%	English Reading Fluently: 67%
	FI Reading Accurately: 22%	FI Reading Accurately: 46%
	FI Reading Fluently: 15%	FI Reading Fluently: 46%
Grade 3 Provincial	Reading: 87%	Reading: 81%
	Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 92%	Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82%
	Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 88%	Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%
Grade 5 Board	Reading: 71%	Reading: 81%
Math Assessments	School Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations	Board Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations
Grade 2 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 98%	Mathematics Concepts: 95%
Grade 3 Provincial	Mathematics Concepts: 83%	Mathematics Concepts: 71%
Grade 5 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 79%	Mathematics Concepts: 84%

Our English students show positive results on the Grade 2 HRSB literacy assessment. Results for our Grade 2 French Immersion students fall below expectations. This need is being addressed through ongoing consultation and professional learning. Our Grade 3 students are meeting with success in literacy. The Grade 5 literacy assessment reveals that greater emphasis needs to be placed on reading varied media text as students engage in the reading process.

Provincial and HRSB math assessments indicate that students at the primary to Grade 2 level are meeting with success in all areas of mathematics. Assessment results indicate that as students encounter the demands of mathematics at the upper grade levels, success in the areas of number sense, geometry, patterns and algebra, and data management remain reasonably strong. However, success in computation and estimation are areas that need to be addressed.

Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessments are ongoing at BLT. Teacher teams meet on a consistent basis to develop their program. To help in assessing our school-wide focus in literacy and mathematics, each grade level created and conducted a common assessment in writing and computation. This information is used to inform instruction and student progress. Results of our writing assessments at the grade P-2 level reveal that in the area of ideas, 79% of primary to two students met or exceeded the expectations. In organization, 73% did well and in conventions 67% met criteria developed by our grade level teams. These results decline as students progress through the grade levels and the demands of the writing process become greater. At the Grade 3-5 level in generating ideas in writing 70% met or exceeded the expectations. In organization 71% did well and in conventions 62% met the criteria. A similar trend is noted in computation. Students at the primary and Grade 1 levels are strong at 91% and 87% respectively. Results for our Grade 2 students are not quite as strong at 73%. As we look at the Grade 3-5 results the Grade 3s are at 80%, while our Grade 4s and fives are at 61% and 62% respectfully. The trend is consistent with what we have been seeing with other assessments in that students at the upper levels are challenged by computation. Our Professional Learning Community teams are responding to the need through ongoing professional collaboration and re-teaching of critical skills and concepts. This will be the continued focus for our Planning for Improvement initiative.



Student Engagement

HRSB surveys completed by students in Grade 4 and 5 reveal that 91% are happy with their grades, 75% indicate that they like reading while 68% like writing. It is interesting to note that 82% of the students see themselves as good writers. Of the students surveyed, 72% of the students like learning math, and 78% see themselves as being good in math. 93% of the students surveyed say they try their best and 83% say they like to learn. In response to questions regarding extra-curricular activities, 58% participate in sports-related activities while 38% participate in activities such as drama and music.

Time to Learn

All schools in the Halifax Regional School Board follow the Time to Learn requirements set by the Department of Education. This means that each course or subject has a required or recommended number of minutes. We have worked hard to cut down on class interruptions. For example, during the past year the teacher survey indicated that only 4.2% of our teachers felt that visitors arriving at the classroom door interrupted the student's learning. That means that 95.8% of our teachers felt that the number of visitors coming to the door has been kept to a minimum as to not interrupt student learning.

Professional Development

When teachers learn, students learn. Teachers at BLT are actively involved in professional development on an on-going basis. This year, our school-based PD days focused on Planning for Improvement and Assessment. At BLT we have very active Professional Learning Communities at each grade level. The PLCs collaboratively plan, discuss and evaluate curriculum outcomes and instruction which leads to effective teaching strategies for students. 92% of teachers reported on the school board survey that school-wide professional development supports the work we do with our school's Planning For Improvement goals.

In addition to the above mentioned professional development, many of our teachers have participated in math and literacy sessions offered by the Halifax Regional School Board. The knowledge and skills they gained from these sessions have had a direct impact on the learning of our students.

Additional School Supports

At BLT we have a number of additional school supports to improve student achievement:

- English as a Second Language teacher
- speech-language pathologist
- Learning Centre teachers
- resource teachers
- african nova scotia student support
- educational program assistants (EPAs)
- lunch monitors
- guidance counsellor
- literacy coordinator
- school psychologist
- French literacy consultant
- secretaries
- Reading Recovery teachers
- library support specialist
- French monitor
- student teachers
- behaviour specialists
- extra help sessions
- home reading program volunteers
- math consultant



Planning for Improvement

The school community takes pride in our students' accomplishments. There is much to celebrate here at BLT. However, we also know that we can always improve. As a result, 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.

Our school staff has chosen goals in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and student engagement. We have discovered from looking at student achievement data that our students could benefit from a focus on writing and have been working towards this goal throughout the 2008-2009 year. We want our students to be better able to organize

their thoughts and ideas in written communication. This skill will allow them to experience further success in all academic areas. In mathematics, we are focusing our school improvement efforts on developing students' computational procedure abilities. Our final goal is to increase student engagement by improving student attitude towards school life. We feel working on this goal will increase our overall performance in all subject areas.

Below, you will find BLT's plan for improvement for your information. You will see details about what teachers will be focusing on with their students in class and also what teachers will be learning themselves in order to achieve our school goals.

School Goals

Mathematics Goal

To improve student achievement in math by focusing on computational procedures. (With a focus on subtraction and math facts in P-3, multiplication in Grade 4 and multiplication and division in Grade 5.)

Strategies:

- build a school wide plan of action for students who are struggling with computation and quick recall of basic facts
- administer common pre test of computational procedures and mental math outcomes per grade level in October and April
- review the results of common assessments to inform instruction and discussions in grade level groups
- school-wide math committee made up of one member from each grade level to meet on a monthly basis
- utilize the board math support team to discuss specific strategies to assist teachers with explicit instruction, best practice, curriculum alignment, supporting struggling students

Literacy Goal

To improve student writing, focusing in year two on ideas, organization and conventions.

Strategies:

- the literacy committee will lead discussions with grade levels to develop a curriculum map
- teachers will have students write daily using the Writer's Workshop model
- administer writing assessments three times per year at each grade level
- French Immersion classes (3-5) should report on both English and French writing
- use student, teacher and school wide input to come to a clear understanding of the levels on the rubrics
- emphasize a balance between reading and writing in the resource program
- literacy coordinator will assist teachers with writing practices.

Engagement Goal

To increase the level of student engagement by improving student

attitude toward and participation in school life.

Strategies:

- provide school-wide PEBS training for all staff in September
- identify and provide support to disengaged students by conducting student and staff surveys by October 15, 2009 and May 1, 2010
- support from Board personnel and school RCH Team to provide direction and support for conducting student focus groups, taking into consideration areas in the curriculum and student life that might require additional sensitivity and training. (October 2009)
- refer students with repeated office referrals to the Program Planning Team monthly
- have the whole student body learn some key songs to build a sense of community



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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