

# Dartmouth High



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## School and Community Context

Dartmouth High School was opened in 1959. It serves a clientele of diverse cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Its Feeder schools include Bicentennial, Prince Arthur, John Martin, Ellenvale and Caledonia (late French Immersion). Dartmouth High School currently has 1100 students and 72 teaching, support, and administrative staff. We offer a broad-based academic program to students from grades 10-12 including French Immersion, Options and Opportunities, Co-operative Education, instrumental music and many advanced level courses. As the only secondary French Immersion school in Dartmouth, it is home to students from a variety of neighborhoods within the Dartmouth area. Dartmouth High offers a wide variety of teams, clubs and activities for all students. In 2008, our audio-visual room underwent a major renovation and Keating Hall was

unveiled. This has enhanced our fine arts program immensely and serves as an asset to our feeder schools and the community as a whole.

All members of our school community work hard to ensure a positive and welcoming school environment where student success is the primary focus. We are currently active in developing our Planning For Improvement (PFI) plan to improve student achievement. Our PFI plan is a living document that will evolve to meet the changing educational needs of all our learners.



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## Family and Community Involvement

Dartmouth High uses many communication tools such as a monthly newsletter, our website, School Messenger, parent teacher and curriculum nights. According to the PFI survey results, 93% of parents/guardians feel welcome at DHS. When they are able to help with school activities and events, 80% feel appreciated by our school staff. Dartmouth High actively seeks out parent and community involvement (90%). We are constantly working towards improving parent communication.

## Safe and Orderly Environment

Survey results indicate that 91% of parents feel that Dartmouth High is a safe place. We are proud to say that 87% of our students do not feel they are treated any differently because of their culture or race. We believe this is due to the fact that our staff reflects the cultural diversity of the community it serves. Student survey results report that 85% of our students treat staff with respect; however only 45% of staff feel respected

by students. Dartmouth High will be introducing Positive Effective Behaviour Supports (PEBS) to encourage positive student behaviour. Student survey results report that 77% of students have never been bullied at Dartmouth High and 72% of students know of at least one staff person they can go to for support.

## Provincial Assessment Results

Nova Scotia examinations (NSE) in Mathematics 12, Advanced Mathematics 12, English 12 and English/Communications 12 are designed and administered by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. These examinations are administered at the end of each semester in January and June. As with all provincial examinations, the pass mark is 50 percent. The examination counts as 30 percent of the students' final course mark. Classroom assessment makes up the other 70 percent. Please note that the percentages used throughout this report are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Assessment	School Results: Percentage of students who had an exam mark of 50% or above	Board Results: Percentage of students who had an exam mark of 50% or above	School Results: Percentage of students who had a course mark of 50% or above	Board Results: Percentage of students who had a course mark of 50% or above
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: Mathematics	30%	45%	77%	83%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: Advanced Mathematics	63%	62%	100%	93%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: English	94%	94%	98%	97%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: English Communications	82%	88%	91%	95%

This year, Dartmouth High students wrote two Provincial exams in English and mathematics. Compared to last year, results from the first semester have shown a decline in achievement in mathematics. As a result, the math department has identified areas that will require greater focus. One such area is literacy in mathematics. Students could benefit from working through word problems within a variety of contexts other than the usual (i.e. throwing ball for quadratics). Also, greater attention needs to be paid to course selection of students, math pre-requisites and sequential scheduling of math courses. We intend to develop strategies aimed at addressing these issues.

Dartmouth High experienced greater success with the Grade 12 advanced English provincial assessment as opposed to the Grade 12 academic English. We have not had an opportunity to do an indepth study of the results to determine what factors may have influenced these results. This will be explored throughout th PFI process.

## Classroom Assessment

Dartmouth High staff has participated in school-wide and board-wide professional development on assessment and evaluation practices. Teachers employ a variety of assessment and evaluation strategies to meet a variety of learning needs and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways in order to optimize student achievement. Teachers are currently working in common subject area teams to create common course outlines and common assessments. We have piloted common assessments in the Grade 10 Academic Math program and the Science 10 program. It is anticipated that as we proceed with the Planning For Improvement process, the practice of common assessments will extend to all areas of the curriculum.

On another note, we have school-based statistical data to show that there is a direct correlation between student achievement and attendance. The first semester end of term marks indicate that 10% of our failing students had an average mark of 29%, with an average of 29 absences (approximately 6 weeks of school). Conversely, 90% of passing students had an average mark of 79% with an average of only 6 absences. Staff are concerned with these alarming numbers, but we are optimistic that PEBS will help in encouraging regular attendance. As a school, one of our main goals is to encourage parents to work with the school to ensure that their child is attending school on a regular basis and to take a more active role in tracking their child's attendance through our online attendance tracker (Parent Wise). By working together, we have a greater chance of improving student attendance which impacts on student achievement.



## Student Engagement

We feel Dartmouth High is doing a good job of keeping students engaged, whether in the classroom or in extracurricular involvement. Survey results show that 81% of students feel they try their best in school, and 97% of students say they want good grades. Survey results show 80% of students are confident in their ability to learn in all subject areas. Statistically, students feel more actively involved in hands-on courses, such as art, the 02 program, Co Op, and phys-ed. We need to improve our students' confidence in French courses (immersion and core) by encouraging diverse learning strategies.

## Time to Learn

All schools in the HRSB follow the time to learn requirements set by the Department of Education. Most courses at Dartmouth High are taught 80 minutes/day, 5 days/week. The PFI surveys show 65% of students and 59% of staff feel their learning is interrupted a lot due to announcements over the PA. Consequently, we decided to install a video announcement system in the main foyer that will allow students to see school announcements all day long. Also, announcements will be posted on the school's website and hard copies will be posted around the school as well. Other disruptions to the school day have been identified through the surveys and will be explored further.

## Professional Development

Teachers at Dartmouth High are actively involved in various professional development initiatives. Every October, teachers and support staff participate in professional development (PD) for a particular subject area of their choosing. Our literacy and math coaches continue to work with staff members to improve research-based effective teaching practices. Our school-based PD days focused on literacy strategies across the curriculum, assessment, PEBS, school safety procedures, individual program planning and PD360 (online PD for teachers). We have had presentations at staff meetings on PEBS, Race Relations, Cross-Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH), Duke of Edinburgh program and PFI (Planning For Improvement).

## Additional School Supports

At Dartmouth High, we have a number of additional school supports in place to support student achievement::

- ESL (English as a Second Language teacher)
- Speech-Language pathologist (part-time)
- resource teacher
- student support worker
- educational program assistants
- guidance counsellors
- math coach
- literacy coach
- school psychologist
- teen health centre nurse
- teacher librarian
- library support specialist
- math support room
- credit recovery program
- police liaison officer
- peer tutoring for math
- technology support
- school planning team
- at-risk team

## Graduation Rates

School Year	Rate
2008-2009	93.6%

Over the past number of years, DHS has seen over 80% of its graduates pursue post-secondary studies.

Destination after high school	Rate
Community College	17%
University	60%
Other education or training	4%
Join work force	4%
Unknown	15%

# Planning for Improvement

Dartmouth High takes great pride in our students' success and accomplishments. We are 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 has chosen goals in the area of literacy, numeracy and promoting a positive school culture. In terms of numeracy, we are in the process of identifying factors that have impacted on our declining results and are pursuing ways to improve student achievement in math. From looking at our school baseline data from our school-based literacy assessment, we would like our students to improve in the areas of using text features (identifying key

information in text books) and in vocabulary. On a positive note, 61% of students read at home because they like to read. In June, 2009, in light of the board's focus on student achievement, Dartmouth High established a PFI lead team. Starting September, 2009, this team will implement the first phase of the PFI process. The school's focus during this process will include:

- creating an environment where all students succeed
- building strong and effective professional learning communities (PLC)
- meeting the provincial accreditation requirements.

## School Goals

### Literacy Goal

1. Increase supports for students at-risk in literacy
2. Increase staff literacy awareness

#### Strategies:

- literacy coach and team to deal with cross-curricular issues and strategies
- establish English 10/Learning Strategies to support previously identified students
- purchase literacy support materials
- collaborating to share ideas and best practices (PLC)
- PD on literacy issues and strategies

### Numeracy Goal

1. Increase supports for students-at-risk for numeracy
2. Increase the number of students who elect to take a third math course
3. Increase student achievement in the Grade 12 provincial assessment

#### Strategies:

- identify students at risk through school-based assessment tools
- proper placement of students in math courses

- teachers and counsellors promote third math course to increase post-secondary opportunities
- peer tutoring program initiated
- implementation of credit recovery
- PD on varied instructional and assessment strategies

### Promoting a Positive School Culture Goal

1. Increase the cultural diversity of the teaching staff
2. Promote cultural awareness
3. Increase positive student behaviour
4. Improve attendance

#### Strategies:

- work proactively to secure more visible minority teachers at Dartmouth High
- grade level assemblies to communicate appropriate behaviours
- support exam exemption policy



**Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.**

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