

Gorsebrook Junior High



WWW.GJHS.EDNET.NS.CA

School and Community Context

Gorsebrook Junior High serves approximately 200 students from Grades 7 to 9. We are a diverse community of learners. The school is a dual track school, offering both English and early French Immersion programs. We are located close to the downtown core, three major universities, social agencies and children's health services. As a result, 10-15% of out students are out-of-area transfers, short term placements or English Second Language (ESL) students. Our demographic and economic data shows that we draw students from across the city and families from a wide variety of economic backgrounds.

We are fortunate to be able to offer our students a student support worker and teacher, an English as a Second Language teacher, a Metro Immigration Support Association worker, The Big Brother Big Sister in-school mentorship program and

an EXCEL lunch program. We also have a teen health center. The school has strong support from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Advisory Council (SAC).

Trends in our data have shown an increase in parent and community members feeling welcomed, and also regularly receiving information about the school. We are presently using e-mail distribution lists, Grade-keeper, school and teacher websites, newsletters, phone calls and parent e-mails to communicate with our families.

We offer our students a wide variety of sports and extracurricular activities such as musicals and fitness clubs. With the help of the Coalition for Kids, we have started a community outreach with local senior centers. This program has allowed our students to visit and perform for seniors. We are working hard to become a better community school.



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Family and Community Involvement

Trends in our survey results show that more than two-thirds of our parents feel welcome at our school. When parents and guardians are able to help at the school, 80% reported that they feel appreciated for their efforts. An area that we are trying to improve is communication. We use email, staff and school web sites, Grade Keeper and phone calls as our primary means of communication. Parents can be directly involved in the school through either our PTA or the SAC..

Safe and Orderly Environment

Gorsebrook is a safe and caring school. Our survey results show 80% of our students say they have never been bullied at school. The school uses positive effective behaviour supports to promote good behaviour. We use bear paws to reward positive conduct. Our staff works very hard to create a safe environment. Our students can participate in programs such as Go Girls, the breakfast program, peer tutoring,

U-Matter peer intervention, intramurals, sports, musical, yoga, Wii Fit club, running club, fantastic female fitness, break dancing, and Coalition for Kids. All of these activities provide our students with positive pro-social choices. We will continue to explore ways to offer programs for students to enhance their safety and opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

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 8 Board	Reading: 83%	Reading: 81%
Grade 9 Provincial	Reading: 90% Writing: 94%	Reading: 84% Writing: 96%
Math Assessments	School Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations	Board Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations
Grade 8 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 75%	Mathematics Concepts: 72%

Classroom Assessment

Our teachers participate in professional learning communities (PLCs). One of the jobs of the PLC is to look at current assessment research and develop common assessments to help guide teaching. The literacy PLC used school wide assessments in October and May to look at areas of writing such as grammar, word choice and spelling. The October results were used to create a baseline of achievement for the school. The May assessment was used to see how the focused teaching lessons had improved our students' achievement. The members of the literacy PLCs are continuing to adjust and develop lessons and strategies to support our students. The numeracy (math) PLC has been focusing on number concepts, with an emphasis on fractions, and mental math strategies. The members of this PLC worked on developing new approaches to teaching fraction concepts using manipulatives. This year they will be administering common assessments to support our new school goals. All of the classroom data is designed to support our learners and to give better feedback to our families.

Our testing results (HRSB) showed the students' scores in literacy and math have consistently scored above the Canadian and regional school board average. The most recent assessment also supports this finding. We will continue to address the areas of concern that have been identified through the collection of classroom, PLC and board assessment data. The staff of the school continues to work hard at improving the ways that they assess and evaluate our students. We will continue to update our community about the work that we are doing in the area of classroom assessment. Our staff will receive professional development (PD) on assessment and evaluation in order to provide our student's with the best opportunity to be successful.

We have spent a great deal of time this past year working with the HRSB assessment and evaluation leader who worked with each of our PLCs and offered a number of lunch time PD sessions. These sessions focused on aligning our grading practices to the curriculum outcomes. We also worked on developing markbooks that are outcome related.

Our staff is also looking at ways in which they can improve students' knowledge of the curriculum outcomes. Research shows that students do better if they know what they are supposed to learn, how they will learn it and how they will show their learning will be taught. To help our students, the staff will break down the language of the outcomes so that the students have a clearer understanding of what they are going to learn. We are also committed to providing students with more information on the purpose of the assessments they are given. For example, staff may give a writing assignment to check how well students are understanding the work that has been covered. They would use the results to guide instruction, not necessarily for the determination of a final mark. This type of assessment for learning is designed to give the teacher feedback about how well students are progressing toward the outcomes being covered. This gives the students more of an opportunity to have their learning needs met and to achieve the desired outcomes.



Student Engagement

We feel that we are doing well in keeping our students engaged. Our sports program has 57% student participation, while 48% of our students are involved in art, drama or music, and 16% of our students are involved in other school clubs or groups. Eighty-six percent of our students feel confident in their abilities to learn in English language arts, 71% of our students feel confident about their abilities to learn French language arts, and 82% of our students feel confident about their abilities to learn mathematics. We need to improve student engagement in Core French at all grade levels. We are working with HRSB program staff to improve this area.

Time to Learn

All schools in the HRSB follow the Time to Learn requirements set by the Department of Education. All of our students are provided with one hour of uninterrupted instruction in math and english daily. Sixty-seven percent of teachers reported that they are not often interrupted by announcements. We continue to look for ways to reduce the interruptions caused by use of the PA system.

Professional Development

When teachers learn, students learn. Teachers at Gorsebrook are actively involved in professional development (PD) on a regular basis. We have a literacy coach who works with our language arts teachers. We also use an HRSB math leader who works with our numeracy PLC. As a school, we are concentrating our professional development on spelling, differentiated instruction, and extended learning. All of our staff are involved in PD opportunities that support their teaching practices. Some of these professional development initiatives include: enrichment, continuing education in Masters programs, literacy, mathematics, yoga to encourage students in mental math activities, assessment and evaluation, differentiated instruction and developing common assessments. Some of our staff have been recognized for their teaching and have been invited to present at various conferences or school groups within the province, and the HRSB.

Additional School Supports

At Gorsebrook Junior High, we have a number of additional school supports to improve student achievement:

- English as a Second Language teacher
- Learning Centre teacher
- speech language pathologist
- school psychologist
- resource teacher
- junior high support teacher
- junior high support worker
- educational program assistants
- lunch monitors (excel)
- guidance counsellor
- literacy coach
- math leader
- community teen health centre
- administrative assistant
- librarian
- literacy support teacher
- peer tutoring
- individual extra help
- school planning team
- program planning team
- various board personnel



Planning for Improvement

During the past year Gorsebrook was involved in the Planning for Improvement (PFI) process. During the PFI process the school gathers data to develop goals that will have the greatest impact on student learning. It is a good model for improvement and we are excited about the opportunity that this will provide for our staff and students.

Our first goal was to create a lead PFI team. The team included; the principal, the vice-principal and two teachers. The two lead teachers organized PD days and worked with the HRSB staff, our teachers, and SAC to create a school self-assessment. The self-assessment was designed to show what we were doing well and in which areas we could improve. Information was gathered from the HRSB surveys, classrooms, outside testing from the board, national

and international agencies. The school self-assessment was used to generate our two school improvement goals. It was presented to all staff, the SAC, board personnel and a review team.

The plan was reviewed in early May and was revised, resubmitted and accepted in June. This year is the implementation year for the PFI goals. We are anxious to see how much our school will improve. We will update our families frequently on the progress that we are making in achieving our goals.

School Goals

The school's goals have been developed to address immediate needs but to also provide long term benefits. The literacy goal will help students handle more complex writing demands as they move through their school careers. The numeracy goal will allow students to concentrate on more difficult operations using higher level skills.

The Literacy Goal is to improve our students' achievement when communicating through persuasive writing.

Strategies:

- PLCs will create and conduct multiple common assessments at each grade level to inform instruction.
- Literacy PLCs will create lessons that address the specific persuasive.
- Teachers will meet in PLCs and school planning teams to address the needs of students who are achieving all of the specified outcomes related to persuasive writing skills.
- Literacy PLCs will align the ELA and FLA outcomes to support persuasive writing from grade to

grade.

- Students will be provided an opportunity to write persuasively in all subject areas.
- Staff will meet to research, develop, and implement best practice strategies for persuasive writing.
- All teachers will use the literacy coach to develop and implement persuasive writing in their content area.
- Resource and other teaching support staff will be used to help students develop mastery of persuasive writing outcomes.
- Staff will seek out and attend professional development sessions on persuasive writing

Our mathematics goal is to improve our students achievement in fraction related outcomes.

- Strategies.
- PLCs will align fraction related outcomes from grades 7-9
 - PLCs will create and administer classroom and grade-level assessments to determine students strengths and needs in fractions

- Teachers will use the five representational strategies to determine students' understanding of the fraction outcomes.
- Math teachers will use lessons that promote various problem-solving strategies to help students' understanding of fraction-related outcomes.
- All subject area teachers will provide students opportunities to problem solve using fractions.
- Teachers will meet in PLCs and school planning teams to address the needs of students who are not achieving all of the fraction related.
- Teachers will meet in PLCs and school planning teams to address the needs of students who are not meeting the specified outcomes.
- Teachers will use curriculum mapping to develop and implement grade level mental math activities for fraction-related outcomes.
- Staff will research, develop, and implement best practice lessons for fraction-related outcomes.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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