

Graham Creighton Junior High



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School and Community Context

Graham Creighton Junior High (GCJH) has served the area of Cherry Brook and surrounding communities since 1964.

Originally a high school during the sixties and seventies, our school became a junior high in 1979. The communities have grown resulting in a student population of 385 and 28 staff. It has always been one of our underlying goals to establish a welcoming environment through positive staff and student relationships.

Throughout the years, we have offered two programs: English - regular program and late French Immersion. In the 2009-2010 school year, we are offering early French Immersion to continue this program for the students joining us from Bell Park Academic Centre. In addition, we have a strong fine arts program for band and art students and a physical education program for all students. In recent surveys, our students selected

these programs to be their favorites.

As we serve one of the largest African Nova Scotian communities in the province, the valued history and African culture has enriched the diversity in our school. Our students participate in our assemblies celebrating our diversity at various times of the year. Our largest assemblies are the Remembrance Day Ceremony and African Heritage Month Celebration. During these times, we invite guest and honored speakers to enhance our students' appreciation of these events.

There is a strong sense of community within our school as our students and staff go through their day. We welcome all visitors and strive to meet the needs of our students.

We will continue to investigate and search through available school data to seek ways to see that all our students are successful learners.



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Family and Community Involvement

In our most recent survey, 84% of parents participating indicated they felt welcome at our school. We encourage all parents to be involved in their child's education. Through our curriculum night, parent/teacher interviews, school concerts, athletic events, volunteering, etc., there are numerous ways for parents to be involved. We get great support from parents related to athletic events. We will strive to engage more parents in both the academic and athletic offerings at Graham Creighton Junior High.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Our daily routines for students are monitored by our staff. We remind students of procedures and expectations of a safe school. The implementation of our Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS) program is designed to reward and teach students respect for our school.

Throughout the years, we have offered peer mediation and various anti-bullying presentations to em-

phasize our effort to create a safe school. From our most recent student survey, less than 5% of respondents indicated bullying was a daily problem for them. Although low, this is a percentage we must reduce. We encourage students to seek support when this occurs, and we will make every effort to have their issue resolved.

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: 68%	Reading: 81%
Grade 9 Provincial	Reading: 80% Writing: 92%	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: 57%	Mathematics Concepts: 72%

At Graham Creighton, we utilize many sources of data to identify strengths and needs. The provincial and board assessments conducted this year provide us with such data. In review, our Grade 9 students are demonstrating competency in writing. However, we are seeing a weakness in reading for Grade 8 students. Grade 9 reading results are comparable to the board results. In the area of Grade 8 math, there is a weakness. In overall examination of these findings, and the data from classroom assessment, we establish our specific goals for each school year. In our school plan for improvement, we have supported the goals by identifying strategies for teachers to use. Through the implementation of these goals, we anticipate improved student achievement.

Classroom Assessment

Focus on Writing:

Teachers worked in grade-level teams to review student oral reading records, various literacy assessments, report cards and common assessments in November and May to identify areas of strength and those requiring additional instruction. The November results revealed that 81% of our students met the criteria for generating and developing ideas. In the area of organization, 70% of Grade 9 students met this criteria while 50% of Grade 7 and 8 students met the criteria. This remains an area of focus in literacy.

Focus on Numeracy and Operations:

Within mathematics, teachers have focused on mental math and operations with fractions and decimals. Classroom assessments and baseline data show that 62% of our students are meeting the expectations in using mental math strategies and 59% are meeting expectations in operations with fractions and decimals. In addition, another area of focus in math is improving students' problem solving skills.



Student Engagement

Considering the electronic distractions available to youth today, keeping students academically engaged is a challenge. We are very strong in the area of athletics, 90% of our students surveyed felt they were confident in their ability to learn in physical education. In contrast, in the core subjects, the percentage of students feeling confident was 74%. By understanding the dynamics of our students, we must present our lessons utilizing technology and create more active learning environments.

We value student engagement in our extra-curricular activities by providing a wide variety of opportunities, both academic and athletic for students.

Time to Learn

As set out by the Department of Education (DOE), we follow the Time to Learn requirements for students' time spent in courses.

It is essential that this time be as beneficial as possible. In our recent school improvement survey, there has been an expression of concern by students (60%) and teachers (55%) in regards to classroom interruptions (PA announcements, messages, etc.). We are always fine tuning our daily operations and do recognize this concern. We do have set times for our major announcements and will make every effort to reduce the individual PA announcements that can interrupt classes.

Professional Development

When teachers learn, students learn. Teachers at GCJH are actively involved in Professional Development (PD) on an ongoing basis. Our literacy and math coaches help teachers to incorporate effective teaching and assessment strategies. This year, our school-based PD days with staff focused on team building and our Positive Effective Behaviour Supports (PEBS). Teachers meet on a monthly basis within their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to collaborate and discuss best teaching practices to improve student learning in the areas of math and literacy.

Additional School Supports

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

- English as a Second Language teacher (ESL)
- Learning Centre teacher
- resource teachers
- junior high support teacher
- African Nova Scotian student support worker
- educational program assistants (EPAs)
- guidance counsellor
- math coach
- literacy coach
- school psychologist
- secretary
- literacy support teacher
- black educators association (BEA)
- severe learning disability (SLD) teacher



Planning for Improvement

LITERACY

Throughout the 2007-08 school year teachers, across curriculum areas, applied teaching strategies that focused on basic grammar/spelling, making connections, using text features, and comprehension. From the data sources such as oral reading records, survey results, various literacy assessments, report cards and common assessments, this year's specific goals have targeted reading comprehension in non-fiction text and writing skills in the areas of ideas and organization. Our progress will be measured from results of common assessments held throughout this school year and other data sources.

NUMERACY

Data collected from common assessments, the Grade

9 math assessments as well as other formative assessments indicate our students in Grades 7, 8 and 9 are showing improvement in mental math, fraction operations and algebraic operations. However, there is still a need for greater success with order of operations. There was a trend noted from the CAT-3 math assessment that our students demonstrated a weakness in areas of measurement and number concepts. Baseline assessments are being developed and implemented to collect data in order to highlight weaknesses and strengths at the beginning and end of each grade level.

School Goals

Reading Goal

Grades 7-9 students will show an improvement in reading comprehension in both fiction and non-fiction text.

Strategies:

- Teachers will make use of Reading Workshops in their ELA classes using more independent reading time
- Increased focus on the explicit teaching of reading strategies
- Increased teacher modeling of reading and comprehending behaviors
- Increased focus on text features/cuing systems/word attack strategies

Writing Goal

Grades 7-9 students will demonstrate competency in writing proficiency in the areas of ideas and organization.

Strategies:

- Teachers will make use of Writing Workshop in their ELA classes/ include more independent writing time
- Increased use of graphic

organizers and focus on pre-writing activities

- Encouragement of content area teachers to include writing activities in their subject areas

Grades 7- 9 Mathematics Goal

Grades 7-9 students will develop their mental math skills with a focus on multiplication of single and double digit numbers.

Strategies:

- focus on specific mental math strategies involving multiplication (identified 5 specific strategies)
- incorporate daily mental math
- relate multiplication to real life experiences (i.e. money, metric conversions, etc.)

Grade 7 Mathematics Goal

Grade 7 students will demonstrate greater success completing basic math operations using decimals.

Strategies:

- increase use of manipulative and visual representations (i.e. base 10 and area models)
- incorporate the use of decimals

into other math strands/subjects as well as problem solving

- develop/ strengthen relationships between decimals, fractions and percents.
- focus on mental math strategies that support operations with decimals
- relate the use of decimals to everyday experiences

Grade 9 Mathematics Goal

Grades 8 and 9 students will demonstrate greater success completing basic operations using decimals & fractions.

Strategies:

- increase use of manipulative and visual representations
- incorporate the use of decimals and fractions into other subjects as well as problem solving
- relate fractions to knowledge of decimals from Grade 7/8
- focus on mental math strategies that support operations with decimals and fractions
- relate the use of decimals and fractions to everyday experiences



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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