

Highland Park Junior High



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School and Community Context

Highland Park Junior High School (HPJH) is located in the North End of Halifax. It is the only junior high serving students who live north of North Street and east of Windsor Street. Geographically, this is a huge area comprised of a diverse social and cultural community. We offer English language programming to the 141 students registered for the 2009-2010 school. Our enrollment has declined over the past five years.

Highland Park has a teaching staff of approximately 13 teachers, including a full time principal and vice-principal, resource and learning centre staff. We also have a junior high student support teacher, a math and literacy coach, an African Nova Scotian student support worker, a library support specialist and an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. Our small community school provides an opportunity for staff to get to know all students and

build the positive relationships and connections so important during the junior high school years.

We are very proud of the work our staff and students have done to establish our Youth Health Centre, which has become a valuable resource for students and has provided the opportunity to build important partnerships with other schools and community organizations. In addition to this, a wide range of clubs, sports and extracurricular activities are offered to all students. Despite our small size, we have teams represented in all major junior high athletic events and we are proud to add a hockey team to this list in 2008-2009.

We look forward to working with our community members as we strive to continually improve student learning for all.



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Family and Community Involvement

Our 2005 to 2008 parent/guardian and teacher surveys indicate an improvement in school-community relations, both by parents, guardians and teachers. In this year's survey, 86% of parent responses show that they feel welcome at school and that HPJH invites parent/guardian and community involvement. We have participated in round table discussions both at school and in the community this year and have used the information gathered during these discussions to plan for continued progress.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Our Planning for Improvement (PFI) survey results from 2005 to 2008 indicate that students feel that they are treated fairly by staff members and there was a noted improvement in students feeling that they are not bullied, teased or picked on in school. Teachers note an improvement in school culture and practices reflecting the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) Race Relations, Cross-Cultural Understanding and

Human Rights in Learning policy. Of the parents/guardians who responded in this year's Getting to Great survey, 74% indicated that they work together with school staff to encourage their child's positive and appropriate behaviour. Our Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS) approach continues to be a good strategy to promote appropriate behaviour and a climate of respect for all members of our community.

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: 62%	Reading: 81%
Grade 9 Provincial	Reading: 88% Writing: 98%	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: 54%	Mathematics Concepts: 72%

Our Grades 8 and 9 students participated in provincial and board-wide assessments this year. The information gained through these assessments will help us determine our next steps in improving student achievement in literacy and mathematics. At Highland Park Junior High we are pleased to report that our students have consistently performed extremely well in writing in the board-wide and Department of Education literacy assessments. In fact, 71% of Grade 9 students, previously identified in Grade 6 as needing extra support in writing, have now met provincial expectations. In reading, our Grade 9 students are performing above the board average. However, our Grade 8's are performing below average. As a result of this data, we have made the teaching of reading strategies a focus for improving student achievement. These strategies will support the comprehension of all subject area materials.

In October 2008, our Grade 8 students participated in the Canadian Achievement Test (CAT) in the areas of mathematics and computation and estimation. The results indicated that 45% of our students met the expectations in the area of mathematics. With regard to computation and estimation, the results showed that 34% of our students met the expectations. The greatest needs are in the areas of number sense and whole number operations. To address these needs our teachers have been committed to implementing improved teaching practices and instructional strategies to ensure all students improve in mathematics.

Classroom Assessment

Focus on writing and reading:

Teachers in all subject areas gave several assignments throughout the year to specifically assess writing. The writing assignments were used to identify areas of strength and areas requiring additional instruction. Results of these ongoing assessments have indicated writing has improved. In the area of reading, a school wide assessment was administered. At each grade level, social studies passages were designed to assess students' ability to read and understand what they have read. Results showed that the majority of students were able to read aloud successfully. However, their ability to understand and re-tell were areas that needed to improve.

Focus on mathematics:

During our math team's monthly meetings teachers expressed concern regarding the need to improve basic operations and computation skills of HPJH students. Throughout the year our math teachers gave the same assessment to all students once each term in the areas of number sense and basic operations with a focus on fractions and decimals. After looking carefully at the data, during our monthly meetings, we have seen a noticeable difference between the daily classroom assessment results reported by teachers and both the board and school-wide common assessment results. We will continue to explore possible reasons for the differences in these assessment results.



Student Engagement

Our students have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, including sports, academics and enrichment opportunities clubs and teams. Students indicate that they feel confident in their ability to learn language arts, Personal Development and Relationship (PDR) and family studies. Sixty-seven percent of students also feel that the schoolwork they are given in language arts is "just right;" 63% of students feel confident about their ability to learn in math and 42% indicate that their math work is challenging. Hands-on learning in math will continue to be a focus of our school plan for improvement.

Time to Learn

Our student schedules follow the guidelines of the provincial Time to Learn strategy. Every student receives one hour of English language arts and one hour of math instruction each day. Other subject areas range from one to three hours per week.

Both students and teachers indicated on their Getting to Great survey that student learning is interrupted more than it should be due to students talking at inappropriate times and other types of student discipline. To address this we have been focusing "Mentor Group" time on teaching our matrix of behaviour expectations and rewarding positive behaviour with Dragon Prides.

Professional Development

A great deal of time, support and staff resources have been directed to professional development this year, including:

- common assessment planning, preparation and marking
- Positive Effective Behaviour Supports (PEBS) training
- differentiated instruction
- strategies to improve classroom management
- manipulative use in math
- vocabulary development in all subject areas
- geometry sessions on background knowledge and effective assessment
- graphing calculators session for Grade 9 math curriculum implementation
- data coaching sessions
- Spelling in-service day for all teachers

Additional School Supports

- Learning Centre teacher
- resource teacher
- guidance counsellor
- junior high support teacher
- educational program assistant (EPA)
- secretary
- custodian
- African Nova Scotian student support worker
- math coach
- literacy coach
- literacy support teacher
- severe learning disabilities teacher (SLD) (scheduled as required)
- English as a Second Language teacher (ESL)
- speech-language pathologist
- school psychologist
- library support specialist-60%
- lunch monitor
- technology support person
- youth health centre nurse
- guided study hall



Planning for Improvement

The HRSB's Planning for Improvement process helps us to identify what our students are doing well and what areas need further attention and improvement. Highland Park Junior High has a clear and committed focus on improved achievement for all students. We have developed school goals in literacy and mathematics as well as directed many resources and professional development opportunities to support this commitment.

HPJH has now completed our second year of implementation of Planning for Improvement. We have carefully analyzed the data collected over the past few years and determined that our goal to effectively use community volunteers to support student achievement has been met. In addition, it was determined that the math and literacy

goals and strategies needed to be developed further to better support student learning.

After looking closely at board-wide, provincial and classroom assessments in math, we know that we need to focus on the areas of operations and number sense. In literacy, we have seen an improvement in our reading results and now need to focus on comprehension.

You will find details in the following school improvement plan about what teachers will be focusing on with their students in class and what teachers will be learning themselves (professional development) in order to make our goals a reality for our students.

School Goals

Literacy Goal

To improve student achievement in reading comprehension with a focus on summary and main idea.

Strategies:

- teachers will provide focused reading time for a minimum of one hour per week in all core subject areas
- teachers will implement strategies to support summary and main idea in all subject areas
- teachers will introduce new vocabulary at the start of a new concept
- teachers will support the use of technology (e.g. Kurzweil) in the classroom to facilitate reading comprehension
- students will participate in weekly non-fiction writing activities
- non-fiction writing in all subjects
- extra language arts time built into the Grade 7 schedule
- independent reading time a focus in all subject areas
- team time used to develop common assessment and best teacher practice

- teachers use common assessment results to provide additional support to students
- lesson plans and units based around different learning styles
- technology to support literacy learning
- 1 hour instructional time each day
- guided study hall for Grade 9

Math Goal

To improve student learning in concepts of operations and number sense.

Strategies:

- teachers will collaborate with the math coach to develop instructional strategies related to number operations
 - teachers will introduce familiar fractions and decimals using mental math strategies
 - teachers will use math manipulatives to increase understanding of fractions
 - teachers will use math manipulatives to increase understanding of decimals
- Programs and Activities:

- team time used to develop common assessments and best teaching practices
- teachers use common assessment results to provide additional support to students
- lesson plans and units based around different learning styles
- instruction based on real-life situations
- extra math time built into the Grade 8 and 9 schedules
- guided study hall for Grade 9
- math games to practice learning used within the classroom
- technology to support math learning
- at least 5 minutes of mental math each day
- non-fiction writing prompt activities embedded within the math curriculum
- Operation Deep Reach program (partnership with Canadian Forces Base Halifax) to reinforce math skills in the workplace



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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