

Ian Forsyth Elementary



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School and Community Context

Ian Forsyth Elementary School (IFES) was built in 1965 in what was once a very rural part of Dartmouth. We offer programming to 330 students from Grades Primary to 6. Our student to teacher ratio is 24:1. Like many urban schools in the HRM, our enrollment has decreased in past years, but it has stabilized in recent years.

Ian Forsyth draws from a very diverse community. Not only is there racial and ethnic diversity among our students (30% are of African Canadian descent), but there is also a significant socio-economic multiplicity. A great deal of emphasis is placed on this diversity, and we embrace our similarities and differences through programming and special events. This diversity helps us to define who we are at Ian Forsyth.

We are proud of the many initiatives and activities that identify our school as one that is held in high es-

teem in our community. Our school is utilized every day and night to promote physical activities like soccer, gymnastics, basketball, floor hockey and skipping. Fine Arts activities like drama, dance, battle of the books, violin, band and choir are emphasized as well. Our numerous community events are always well attended. In addition, our partnerships with local agencies (like the Boys and Girls Club, Rotary Club and Salvation Army) are well established.

We believe that our school is a great school - we have a committed and collaborative staff, energized students and supportive relationships with our parents and community. These elements blend to ensure that our students meet with success academically, physically and socially. This report will outline where we are and how we plan to move forward to improve student achievement. We look forward to your feedback.



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Family and Community Involvement

We are proud to report that 96% of our parents indicate that they feel welcomed at our school. Also, 100% have noted that our school invites parental involvement. Our parents are involved daily in the lives of our students through volunteer work. Also, our Home and School Association has always enriched the lives of our students through the organization of numerous special events. Still, we know that there are many parents who could be more positively involved and we will continue to strive toward this.

Safe and Orderly Environment

IFES is a positive place for students and staff. There exists a sense of welcoming and security that allows for students to learn in a caring environment. We are proud to report that 97% of our students feel that their teachers really care about them and all teachers feel that our school is a safe place to work. This is due to the many programs that we have that promote positive behaviour, such as peer mediation, STAR program,

Comprehensive Guidance, Roots of Empathy and extensive extracurricular events. The enforcement of our Code of Conduct, along with a team approach taken by staff has led to a drastic reduction of discipline incidences and suspensions over the last three years. One of our Accreditation goals involves the implementation of Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS), which will further enhance our positive school climate.

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: 60% English Reading Fluently: 49% | English Reading Accurately: 74% English Reading Fluently: 67% |
| Grade 3 Provincial | Reading: 82% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82% | Reading: 81% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82% |
| Grade 5 Board | Reading: 86% | Reading: 81% |
| Grade 6 Provincial | Reading: 81% Writing: 95% | Reading: 88% Writing: 94% |
| Math Assessments | School Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations | Board Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations |
| Grade 2 Board | Mathematics Concepts: 96% | Mathematics Concepts: 95% |
| Grade 3 Provincial | Mathematics Concepts: 53% | Mathematics Concepts: 71% |
| Grade 5 Board | Mathematics Concepts: 90% | Mathematics Concepts: 84% |

At Ian Forsyth we are pleased to report that our Grade 5 students performed very well in the areas of mathematics and literacy. We are also encouraged that our Grade 3 students performed very strongly in all Department of Education literacy assessments. Our greatest areas of concern lie in the areas of Grade 2 literacy and Grade 3 mathematics. We believe that with continued focus in this area, our Grade 2 literacy results will improve this coming year. We will continue to look at how we can improve overall results in mathematics and we hope to provide additional resource support to our junior elementary grades. It is our belief that meaningful homework will play a vital role in helping our junior elementary students achieve greater success in these areas.

Classroom Assessment

Focus on Non Fiction Writing...

Results from literacy assessments are used to inform classroom instruction and practice to support optimal learning. As part of classroom assessments, teachers use a variety of methods to form a complete picture of the learner: portfolios, exhibitions, observation scales, performance criteria and tasks, group work, and individual work. Perhaps the most important piece of data that we have collected this year is that from the common assessment created by our classroom teachers. In the fall, teachers indicated that only 60% of our students were understanding and achieving their particular grade level expectations (outcomes) for non-fiction writing. Eight months later, that percentage increased by 26 points to 86%.

Focus on Mental Math...

In mental math, we are working towards improvement in fact learning, mental computation, and computational estimation. To achieve this goal, students are provided with a variety of opportunities to learn different strategies to help gain understanding and proficiency in these areas. We have created a mental math assessment that encompasses all of the specific grade level outcomes. The assessment is written every spring. We are pleased to report that the results have improved by 15% over the previous year! We recognize that we have much more work to do in this area; however, we are encouraged by our most recent results.



Student Engagement

Student engagement at our school is a real strength! We have a variety of clubs and teams that our students take advantage of daily. For example, 88% of our senior grade students participate in intramurals, and our fine arts clubs are very well attended. In literacy, our students feel self-assured about their abilities (92% indicate that they are good readers); however, in math, our students are not as confident (79% say they are good at math). This provides us great direction for the school. We are also proud that 100% of parents say that our school invites parental involvement and we all recognize that students are more engaged when their parents are involved.

Time to Learn

The Department of Education has outlined the Time to Learn strategy that all schools follow. Each subject has a required or recommended number of minutes. As a result, our school tries to maximize student learning every day. We have accomplished this by creating safe and purposeful learning environments. We feel we have made significant improvements in this area because we have greatly reduced interruptions to learning. All teachers indicate learning is not interrupted by announcements and extra-curricular activities. However, we know that minor and major discipline issues are areas we can work on to further ensure that time to learn is maximized.

Professional Development

When teachers learn, students learn! The teachers at our school are actively involved in many areas of professional development. In particular, we have focussed on the topics of mental math, writing and promoting a safe school climate. We are fortunate to have a literacy coach who works closely with all staff members to incorporate effective teaching strategies. Our math and Positive and Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS) teams provides PD at staff meetings and PD days. A culture has been created for collaboration and life long learning. Our staff has established the foundation for an effective Professional Learning Community (PLC). Also, 100% of our staff indicates that they use assessment information to develop instructional strategies. In addition, many of our teachers have received special training in Reading Recovery and a number of staff members have developed a graduate degree cohort for At-Risk Literacy Learners from Mount Saint Vincent University.

Additional School Supports

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

- resource teachers
- learning center teachers
- educational program assistants
- Reading Recovery teachers
- guidance counsellor
- literacy coach
- school psychologist
- speech language therapist
- English second language teacher
- school social worker
- behaviour specialist
- autism specialist
- library support teacher
- art teacher
- band/strings teachers
- school secretary
- volunteers
- african NS student support
- lunch monitors
- police liaison officer
- student teachers



Planning for Improvement

At IFES, we want our students to succeed. Schools can only make a lasting difference when they focus on specific goals and strategies for change. School improvement planning is a process through which schools set goals for improvement, and make decisions about how and when these goals will be achieved. The ultimate objective of the process is to improve student achievement by enhancing the way curriculum is delivered, by creating a positive environment for learning, and by increasing the degree to which parents are involved in their children's learning at school and at home.

We have focused our attention on three main areas. Specifically, we have chosen goals in the areas of literacy (non-fiction writing), mental mathematics and a safe school

initiative (PEBS). The strategies for each of these goals are outlined below. These goals were created during the 2007-2008 school year and we have been implementing all the strategies since that time. We invite your questions. If you would like to see a copy of the complete plan, please visit the school. We encourage your participation in implementing and monitoring our plan and we encourage you to join us in making a commitment to the goals we have set. We need more than your cooperation; we need your passion and your strengths. Working together, we can build a school and community of which we can be proud.

School Goals

Literacy Goal

In June 2010, the students who have attended IFES for at least one school year will improve the elements of non-fiction writing.

Strategies:

- investigate traits of writing using current resources
- gather and select traits of writing rubrics for each grade level
- continuously collect data & resources applicable to the implementation of our goal
- create a school based grade level writing assessment task
- conduct pre and post test of school created assessment
- analyze results
- have teachers establish and reflect on individually set writing goals pertaining to the writing traits and the needs of their students for that year
- provide writing resources
- provide in-servicing
- conduct grade cluster meetings
- provide teachers with writing rubrics
- teachers prepare and provide

- lessons for instruction
- schedule common meeting times for teachers at similar grade levels
- create a schedule for students to work on computers in LC and resource rooms
- investigate and purchase new interactive literacy software and subscriptions

Math Goal

By June 2010, 75% of the students will score 75% on our school based math assessment regarding computational mental math.

Strategies:

- math lead team will create a calendar of events and timelines for the year
- ensure that all new teachers have mental math progression chart and all necessary Mental Math booklets
- conduct pre- and post- test of school created assessment
- have teachers establish and reflect on individually set math goals pertaining to computational mental math and the needs of their students

- continue to provide mental math in-servicing and new/needed resources
- continue to conduct grade cluster meetings & common planning times
- monitor student achievement and progress
- purchase interactive math subscriptions and software for students

PEBS Goal

By June 2010, 90% of our school community will indicate that they agree on our school based PEBS survey, that student conduct themselves in a manner that meets the expectations outlined in the PEBS matrix.

Strategies:

- re-establish PEBS team who will be responsible to ensure that initiatives continue to be met
- purchase instructional resources for classrooms
- purchase incentives for reward program
- conduct school created PEBS survey



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

Contact Information: 22 Glencoe Drive, Dartmouth, B2X 1J1

Tel: 902-435-8435 Email: ifes@hrsb.ns.ca Principal: Mary-Jane Scott