

# John MacNeil Elementary



[HTTP://JMES.EDNET.NS.CA](http://jmes.ednet.ns.ca)

## School and Community Context

John MacNeil Elementary School (JMES) has served North End Dartmouth community for forty years, opening in 1969. At that time, the school was a Grade Primary to 9 building with an enrollment of 569 students. Now, we offer programming to approximately 200 students from Grades Primary to 6. Our smaller population provides an opportunity for the staff and students to build a trusting relationship. Although there are quite a few transient students, both in and out, a strong sense of welcoming and pride in belonging to the JMES community is felt as soon as one enters the school. The diversity of our population is evidenced in our halls. All staff members of our school community work hard to ensure a positive and welcoming school environment in which each student's success is the focus. Our staff is dedicated to meeting the needs of all our learners.

Through several grants received, our school has taken part in a five year greening project, which has seen two playgrounds erected, trees and shrubs, flowers planted, a wheelchair accessible garden, a rocks and trees playground and a wildflower garden built. These projects happened because of the physical labour of our many volunteers. Through Art Smart Grants, the children have painted an incredible seasonal mural on the outside of our building, reflecting the outdoor activities that they enjoy the most. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning, there is Breakfast Club which is open to all the school community and is thoroughly enjoyed by students, staff and volunteers. Our school was honoured this year by Premier MacDonald's presence to dedicate the inaugural "Stand Up Against Bullying Day."



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## Family and Community Involvement

The parent surveys show that 92% feel welcome at JMES. Ninety-four percent say that John MacNeil invites parents, guardians and the community to be part of the school. 87% feel that they are appreciated by the school staff when they help in the classroom or school. As we truly appreciate our volunteers, it will be vital to plan events so that each of them feels that they are valued and celebrated throughout the year. A goal would be to have our school's diverse population reflected in our School Advisory Council (SAC).

## Safe and Orderly Environment

At JMES, we have worked hard as a school community to practice and model respect for self, others, education and the environment. Our goal is to provide a safe learning opportunity for all. Survey results (85% parents returned parent surveys) show that 97% of parents feel that the school staff treat their children with respect and 96% feel that the school is a safe place. Although the students feel that their teachers care about them

(94%) and that they can find an adult to talk to (85%), some students indicate that they are being treated unfairly by other students. Some school strategies in place to help students be and feel safe are Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS), Peer Mediation and the JMES Code of Conduct. Continuing to closely monitor students' interactions and to be consistent in our expectations will be a strong focus each year.

## 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: 57% English Reading Fluently: 54%	English Reading Accurately: 74% English Reading Fluently: 67%
Grade 3 Provincial	Reading: 53% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 62% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 62%	Reading: 81% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%
Grade 5 Board	Reading: 79%	Reading: 81%
Grade 6 Provincial	Reading: 67% Writing: 92%	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: 93%	Mathematics Concepts: 95%
Grade 3 Provincial	Mathematics Concepts: 36%	Mathematics Concepts: 71%
Grade 5 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 84%	Mathematics Concepts: 84%

All students in HRSB participated in provincial and school board assessments. The information gathered through this process will help us determine how we at John MacNeil can support improved student achievement in literacy and mathematics. Next year, we will be entering the first year of a five-year Planning for Improvement process, and we will be using data from these results as part of this process. The provincial and board assessments are one snapshot in time of our school and student performance in specific curriculum areas. Often the results come from one example of student performance. Therefore, this data serves to draw our attention to areas that are strengths and areas that may need closer examination or improvement. We will be investigating areas of concern in more detail next year using more school and classroom assessments to determine where improvement is required. In the literacy assessments our narrative writing is an area of relative strength. From the results, non-fiction, or information writing is an area we need to examine next year. Our reading in the Grade 5 assessments was quite high and equivalent to the board averages. In contrast, the results in reading across grades 2, 3 and 6 indicate that more data is required. In the Grade 2 and Grade 5 Math Assessments our results were excellent. The fact that the scores in the grades prior to and following Grade 3 were strong leads us to conclude that there may be other factors to take into account when interpreting the Grade 3 scores. Next year, these results will be used in combination with other school and classroom assessment tools, when we reassess the priorities and needs of our students.

## Classroom Assessment

Every day teachers use a variety of assessment strategies in their classrooms to provide information on student progress and what is required to improve academic achievement. This process allows teachers to plan their lessons in alignment with the curriculum and to best meet each individual student's learning needs. Types of assessments include; observation, anecdotal notes, checklists, reading records, rubrics, individual interviews, self-assessments, class work, quizzes and tests. As part of our Planning for Improvement process we have been using reading records, fluency scales and comprehension rubrics to assess our literacy goals and to improve fluency and comprehension in reading. In mathematics we have been using mental math quizzes and our math coach has conducted two school wide mental math assessments to monitor progress toward our goals.



## Student Engagement

Our school is doing a good job in engaging our students. We host a breakfast program at our school every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and have well over 100 students attend regularly. Our school held an after school basketball program on Tuesdays and Thursdays, a chess club, homework assistance clubs for the upper grades, and is looking at beginning a school intramural sports program next year. Ninety-seven percent of our students responded that they feel their teacher always wants them to try their best; and over 85% of parents who responded said that our school has high academic standards for their child.

## Time to Learn

All schools in the Halifax Regional School Board follow the Time to Learn requirements set by the Department of Education. For example, our classes have uninterrupted math and literacy time scheduled into each day. This occurs across all grade levels. Over 85% of students surveyed report that they have lots of chances to learn by doing things, not just listening to a teacher's lesson. Due to this type of hands-on education, over 80% of students surveyed report that they believe they are good at reading, writing, and math. Our survey also indicated that student learning was occasionally interrupted during the day; therefore, this will be an area of focus in the future.

## Professional Development

The staff at JMES are committed to being life-long learners. As part of this we actively search out and attend professional development sessions to develop and support all aspects of our teaching. Our literacy and math coaches have helped our staff to further develop and explore new teaching strategies. Some of the Professional Development Opportunities (P.D) teachers have participated in over this past year were:

- Assistive Technology
- ADHD Behaviour Support for classroom teachers
- 'Connecting Assessment & Instructional Practice' workshop
- Emergency Management Plan development workshop
- Individual Program Plan writing
- Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS)
- Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH)

## Additional School Supports

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

- African Nova Scotian student support worker
- band program
- community outreach worker
- dental program
- educational program assistants (EPAs)
- English as a Second Language teacher
- guidance counsellor
- Learning Centre teachers
- library support specialist
- literacy coach
- lunch monitors
- math coach
- police liaison
- public health nurse
- Reading Recovery teacher
- resource teachers
- school psychologist
- secretary
- social worker
- speech language pathologist



# Planning for Improvement

John MacNeil Elementary School takes great pride in all our students' successes. Our staff is qualified to assess each student's strengths and challenges and in providing the necessary programming to support each student's progressive achievement. Each student is monitored carefully to ensure progress is being made. 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 staff has chosen goals in the areas of literacy and mathematics. We have discovered from looking at student achievement data in literacy that our students could benefit from a focus on strategies for improving their reading fluency and comprehension. Emphasis is on reading well,

but also on understanding what you have read. These skills will be used by our students in all subject areas throughout their time at school. In mathematics, we are focusing our school improvement efforts on teaching strategies to improve our students' mental math skills. Again, there is a strong emphasis on understanding and discovering what makes sense and skills that will benefit them throughout their future endeavours. We proudly present John MacNeil's school improvement plan for your information. You will find details on what teachers will be focusing on with their students in class and what they will be learning themselves through professional development sessions.

## School Goals

### Literacy Goal

to improve student achievement by focusing on fluency strategies for grades Primary to Grade 2, and on fluency and comprehension strategies for Grades 3-6.

#### Strategies:

The teachers will be using the following practices to monitor each student's achievement:

- classroom anecdotal observations
- Reading Recovery Assessments (Grade 1)
- common assessments for running records (Monthly P-2) and ORRS (Bi-Monthly 3-6)
- common assessment tool for fluency
- portfolios
- rubrics for writing
- guided reading
- AABLs assessments
- guided reading
- literature circles
- differentiated instruction
- assistive technology
- flexible groupings
- teachers working in grade-level

teams, along with the literacy coach, will meet throughout the year to set standards to monitor student achievement and review data. They will use the results from this data to guide their instruction.

The teachers will take part in the following professional development opportunities:

- Finding a Balance Training
- readers and writers workshop
- Professional Learning Communities
- mini literature workshops
- literacy team
- co-teaching and mini-lessons with the literacy coach

### Mathematics Goal

To improve student achievement in mathematics by focusing on strategies for mental math from primary to Grade 6.

#### Strategies:

The teachers will be using the following strategies to monitor and student achievement:

- common assessments and teaching strategies for Mental

Math (P-6)

- daily mental math activities – teaching mental math strategies in a progressive time line from primary to Grade 6
- frequent in class assessments of mental math strategies - weekly
- common school-wide mental math assessment – administered to all students from primary to Grade 6 twice a year. The achievement of each child will be closely monitored from year to year.

The teachers will take part in the following professional development opportunities:

- math team
- math cafes
- math mini-lessons
- development of yearly Math Map to cover curriculum outcomes
- school planning team meetings – weekly
- professional development sessions with math mentor: to develop mental math teaching tools; yearly math map for mental math.



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

Contact Information: 62 Leaman Drive, Dartmouth, B3A 2K9

Tel: 902-464-2488 Email: [jmes@hrsb.ns.ca](mailto:jmes@hrsb.ns.ca) Principal: Wendy Mackey