

# O'Connell Drive Elementary



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## School and Community Context

O'Connell Drive Elementary School (OCDES) serves the rural communities on the Eastern Shore between Lake Echo and Porter's Lake, with a current enrollment of 387 students. The school has been open since September 1997 and has sustained enrollment since its inception and has offered programming to students from grades Primary to Six.

According to our school surveys, 97% of grades 4-6 students feel their teachers really care about them. Due to the stability within our community and low staff turnover, teachers are able to get to know students throughout their academic career and not just during that class year. This provides a built-in support structure for all students.

Parent involvement is extremely important to a child's learning. Children succeed best when they feel their parents are involved in their school lives. With this in mind, we

are very happy to note that 85% of our parents talk with their children about their school work and experiences daily. Also, 91% of our students surveyed try their best in school because their parents want them to try and 98% of students believe they try their best most days.

We offer a variety of student activities including band, intramurals, DARE, French club, choir, peer mediators and OCTV. Our staff also volunteer their time to organize soccer, hockey and to offer extra help to students when needed.

All members of our school community work hard to ensure a positive and welcoming school environment where student success is the focus. Our staff is dedicated to meeting the needs of all learners, and you will see on the last page of this report our plan to improve student achievement.



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## Family and Community Involvement

According to parents surveyed, 95% feel welcomed at our school and 90% of parents state they have a good relationship with their child's teacher. Based on the high number of positive responses toward school involvement we will continue to hold family events such as literacy and math nights as well as other community focused activities. We have strong PTA and SAC involvement at our school. Our PTA has supported the purchase of books and other resources to assist in curriculum delivery.

## Safe and Orderly Environment

According to parents (95%), staff (100%) and grades 4-6 students (95%), OCDES is a safe place to learn, work and play. We believe this is due to the many programs that we currently offer which promote positive behaviours including Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS), peer mediation, DARE, and classroom social skills. We created a behaviour matrix outlining expectations that all school members will demonstrate

respect for self, others, learning and the environment. We teach these expectations to all students and practice them regularly. We reinforce these expectations by recognizing students who demonstrate respectful behaviour with Spot Yas. We also have peer mediators who help solve conflicts on the playground, volunteer referees who help ensure fair play in sports and our lunch monitors who keep our students safe.

## 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: 76% English Reading Fluently: 57%	English Reading Accurately: 74% English Reading Fluently: 67%
Grade 3 Provincial	Reading: 67% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 76% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 72%	Reading: 81% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%
Grade 5 Board	Reading: 86%	Reading: 81%
Grade 6 Provincial	Reading: 91% Writing: 89%	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: 90%	Mathematics Concepts: 95%
Grade 3 Provincial	Mathematics Concepts: 65%	Mathematics Concepts: 71%
Grade 5 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 90%	Mathematics Concepts: 84%

At O'Connell Drive Elementary, we are pleased to report that our students in Grade 5 and 6 have consistently performed well in reading, writing and mathematics. In June 2008, students in Grade 3 had difficulty with comparing, ordering, rounding and computation. All of these skills are within the number sense and number operations area of mathematics which are a focus of our school plan. Within our classroom assessments, we have noticed that basic facts and 3-second recall are still creating difficulties for many students and we will continue to make this a focus.

In reading at the Grade 3 level, although only 67% of students were reading at the appropriate level in September 2008, another 20% were approaching the desired level. In writing at the Grade 3 level, although approximately 75% of our students met the expectations, another 15% of students met some of the expectations on the assessment. We are pleased to report that 95% of our students met expectations in the conventions of writing and 90% of students met expectations in the organization of their writing.

In Grade 2, fluency continues to be the focus of our language arts program. We recognize this as an issue and it is an important piece of literacy development. We will continue to stress the need for "just right" books and constant reading practice both at school and at home to improve fluency.

We are pleased to note that overall, our school goals are aligned with the results of external assessments. We are confident that our future results will show that this has been the focus of our instruction.

## Classroom Assessment

Ongoing assessment practices are used by teachers to improve student learning. They work together at each grade level to develop common assessments, review results and modify teaching practices. School-wide data is collected three times per year in November, March and June in the areas of math, reading and writing. According to the data collection in November 2008 and March 2009, 73% of students are reading independently at an appropriate level, 74% of students are meeting key outcomes in number sense and number operations and 80% of students are meeting outcomes in writing. Results over time have indicated that students not meeting expectations are showing consistent growth and we are closing the gap between where these students are and where we would like them to be. We will continue staff professional development and reflection on teaching practices to ensure continued improvement in student achievement.



## Student Engagement

As a school, we are focused on active learning and different ways of representing learning. Students learn best when they are actively involved in hands on activities which allow them to create their own knowledge. According to students in grades 4-6, 95% feel they have lots of chances to learn by doing things, not just listening to the teacher's lesson. Eighty-two percent try their best because they like what they are learning in school. Seventy-eight percent of our students feel that the work they are given in language arts and math is just right. Eighty-five percent of parents feel that their children are challenged to work at their full potential.

## Time to Learn

All schools in the Halifax Regional School Board follow the Time To Learn requirements set by the Department of Education. This means that each course or subject has a required or recommended number of minutes. We have uninterrupted blocks of time for mathematics, as well as reading and writing workshops at all grade levels. This allows time for mini-lessons, individual and independent work and sharing time. Subjects are also integrated across the curriculum so literacy is an important part of mathematics and math is an important part of science, etc.

## Professional Development

When staff members learn, students learn. Teachers and educational program assistants at O'Connell Drive are actively involved in professional development on an ongoing basis. This year our school based days with staff focused on designing our school plan for improvement and our Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS). Ninety-five percent of teachers surveyed feel that school wide professional development supports the work of the school improvement plan. As a staff, we also examined current practices in light of new research and resources. For instance, together we looked at the new spelling document released from the Department of Education to ensure our word study practices are in line with the recommendations in the document. Each individual teacher also developed and participated in professional development to address their students' needs. Ninety percent of teachers surveyed use the skills and knowledge from professional development opportunities to change their classroom practices.

## Additional School Supports

At O'Connell Drive Elementary we have a number of additional school supports provided to improve student achievement:

- resource teachers
- Learning Centre teacher
- Reading Recovery teacher
- education program assistants
- literacy coach
- speech-language pathologist
- school psychologist
- severe learning disabilities (SLD) support teacher
- library support specialist
- parent volunteers
- EXCEL staff
- school committees
- guest speakers
- special events

We have a very active school planning team which meets bi-weekly and is comprised of teachers from classrooms, resource and Learning Centre, as well as administrators. Teachers refer students who are struggling to the team and we work together to create interventions for them.



# Planning for Improvement

The school community of O'Connell Drive Elementary School takes great pride in our students' success and accomplishments. There is much to celebrate here at our school! However, we also know we can always improve. We are very dedicated to demonstrating our continued improvement. 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 have chosen goals in the areas of literacy and mathematics. We have discovered from looking at student achievement data that our students could benefit from a focus on fluency in reading. We want to encourage our students to use a variety of strategies and techniques

to improve the accuracy of their reading as well as working toward "making their reading sound like talking". This is an important skill that will impact their ability to succeed in any subject. In mathematics, we are focusing our improvement efforts on the areas of number sense and number operations. These areas form the basis upon which all other mathematical knowledge is based. In order for students to be successful with higher order mathematical problem solving, they first need to grasp basic concepts.

We proudly present O'Connell Drive's school goals for your information. You will find details about what teachers are focusing on with their students in class and what teachers are learning themselves.

## School Goals

### Literacy Goal

To increase the percentage of students who are reading accurately and fluently, with comprehension at an appropriate level for their grade.

#### Strategies:

- teachers will create opportunities for individual assessments with students
- teachers will use a reader's workshop model for ongoing assessment of student progress to meet individual student needs
- teachers will teach lessons on fluency
- teachers will teach reading strategies and monitor their use
- teachers will increase comprehension of non-fiction material by focusing on the features of non-fiction text
- our school will use literacy blitzes to support struggling students in the area of reading
- parents will be invited to attend a literacy night at the school
- parents will be invited to participate in reader's workshops in the classrooms.

### Mathematics Goal

To increase the percentage of students who are meeting the key mathematics outcomes as identified in number sense and number operations.

#### Strategies:

- teachers will teach strategies in the areas of number sense and number operations and the use of these strategies will be monitored
- students will be encouraged to use the 5 representations to ensure deeper understanding of basic concepts
- teachers will ensure that all 5 representations are present in their teaching
- students will be encouraged to use manipulatives on a regular basis to enhance their understanding of math concepts
- the mental math model will be used in classrooms with a focus on 3-second recall of basic math facts
- parents will be invited to a math night at the school
- parents will be invited to math class.

### Writing Goal

To increase the percentage of students who are able to effectively communicate their ideas through writing and other forms of representation.

#### Strategies:

- teachers will use the 6 traits of writing to ensure a balanced literacy program
- teachers will use a writer's workshop model for ongoing assessment of student progress
- teachers will increase the use of math journals as a form of communicating ideas
- teachers will use Words Their Way or alternate word study program to increase students' knowledge of word features
- teachers will increase the use of non-fiction for writing topics
- teachers will increase the use of technologies to help meet individual student needs
- teachers will provide opportunities for non-written communication
- parents will be invited to participate in a writer's workshop.



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

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