

St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary



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School and Community Context

Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School has served the north end of Halifax since 1921. We currently offer programming to 240 students from Grades Primary to 6 in French Immersion and English. We are truly a community school. We have a very diverse population and are currently experiencing slight growth in our enrollment. Our classes are for the most part small, giving teachers an opportunity to really connect with their students. We are well supported by our parents and value their presence and participation in our building. We believe that forming relationships with students and parents is the key to developing a positive learning environment. Our teachers care deeply for their students and spend many extra hours preparing activities and working with students. We have developed a very strong support structure for all of our students.

Our students are provided with a variety of opportunities to enrich their school experience through the many clubs and after school programs we offer. We are currently the only school in the HRSB to be sponsored by Kidsfest, a national reading and running program. Our students have the opportunity to participate in instrumental music in Grades 4, 5 and 6. In addition, they are able to experience african drumming as members of our drumming club. We value physical activity and offer our students lunch time intramural programs and after-school running clubs. We offer many other activities which focus on the arts, cultural groups and athletics.

Our staff is dedicated to meeting the needs of all our learners and creating a positive welcoming school environment.



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Family and Community Involvement

At Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School, we appreciate our parents and see them as our most valuable resource. We are constantly seeking ways to invite parents into our school and include them in our classroom activities. Most recently, we offered a weekend conference on Student Achievement: Family Involvement and Teacher Efficacy. This was well attended with 25 families represented. Many of our school events are planned around parent and day-care schedules to enable as many families as possible to attend.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Our survey results indicate that most students at Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School feel safe. For the 2008-09 school-year, we are pleased to report that 90% of our students feel that our school is a safe place to learn. Our staff believes that this is largely due to the varied programs that our school offers to support positive behaviour in our school, such as behaviour programming, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention

training and Positive Effective Behavior Supports (PEBS). Students surveyed also reported that, for the most part, 80% felt welcomed into the school. And, notably, 97% of students attending our school feel their teachers strongly care for them. Our teachers (85%) also feel that the school is a safe place and that students treat staff with respect.

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: 67% English Reading Fluently: 67% FI Reading Accurately: 35% FI Reading Fluently: 35%	English Reading Accurately: 74% English Reading Fluently: 67% FI Reading Accurately: 46% FI Reading Fluently: 46%
Grade 3 Provincial	Reading: 75% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 81% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 81%	Reading: 81% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%
Grade 5 Board	Reading: 50%	Reading: 81%
Grade 6 Provincial	Reading: 91% Writing: 91%	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: 97%	Mathematics Concepts: 95%
Grade 3 Provincial	Mathematics Concepts: 57%	Mathematics Concepts: 71%
Grade 5 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 41%	Mathematics Concepts: 84%

Classroom Assessment

Classroom Literacy Assessment

Focus on Writing

One of our school's literacy goals is to improve student writing. Each term, all students complete a writing sample which is assessed using a rubric designed by our classroom teachers. Our writing rubrics allow teachers to examine student writing in a consistent, documented format. Teachers use this assessment information to direct their explicit teaching. We are pleased to report that more than 65% of our students have improved their writing skills.

Focus on Reading

Our students' reading levels are also assessed individually each term. Year-end results indicate that our students have shown continued improvement in their reading levels. This improvement is a direct reflection of our teachers' focused instruction on oral reading fluency and independent reading.

The HRSB and the Department of Education (DOE) assessments highlight general trends in reading and writing. Most of our upper elementary students meet or surpass school board expectations in reading and writing. Non-fiction reading, active questioning and narrative writing will be a continued focus for our students next year.

Focus on Classroom Mathematics Assessment

Throughout the school year, teachers had extensive in-servicing in math. Our focus of instruction has been on number sense and operations. Although our students are currently not meeting the DOE's expectations in math, we have identified our challenges. To this end, we are directing our professional development to address human variation in learning while creating training models which have proven successful in educating a diverse population as we support teachers in improving student achievement.



Student Engagement

Our survey data indicates that we are successfully keeping our students engaged and active in school. We currently offer a variety of clubs and teams in which 71% of our grades four to six students participate in one or more activities. In addition to their participation in sports and clubs, 86% of our students feel that their math is challenging, yet understandable. In language arts 89% feel they are good readers and 77% feel they are good writers. Overall, 86% of our students feel the language arts curriculum is just right for challenging their abilities.

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. This past year, teachers (85%) indicated that the most frequent interruptions to student learning were office announcements and minor student behaviour issues. As a result of this feedback, we will reduce the number of announcements during the school day as well as revitalize our current PEBS program to assist us in accelerating overall student engagement.

Professional Development

The teachers at Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School are actively involved in professional development on an ongoing basis. We have a literacy coach with a 50% allocation and a math coach with a 33% allocation who spend time helping teachers incorporate effective teaching strategies in the classroom. This year, during our three school-based in-service days, our staff focused on math assessments and strategies by completing a Prime workshop on number sense and operations. Staff also designed writing rubrics that will be used to score students' writing. Another focus for staff was implementing Positive Effective Behaviour Supports (PEBS). The Department of Education launched their new spelling resource with a one-day in-service to support the document. Staff were trained and certified in Non Violent Crisis Intervention (NVCI). At Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School, we understand that learning is a lifelong process and, in order to provide effective teaching, we must continue to engage in current teaching practice.

Additional School Supports

At Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School, we have several additional school supports to improve student achievement:

- speech language pathologist
- school psychologist
- behaviour specialist
- guidance counsellor
- occupational therapist
- school social worker
- math & literacy coaches
- Learning Centre teacher
- Reading Recovery teacher
- resource teachers
- library support specialist
- educational program assistant
- secretary
- English as a Second Language
- lunch monitors



Planning for Improvement

The school community of Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School takes great pride in our students' success. There is much to celebrate at our school. However, we also know that we can do even better. 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, mathematics, and community involvement. We have discovered from looking at our data that our students could benefit from a focus on writing. We would like our students to be better able to organize their ideas, and have a more polished final product. This is an important skill

that will affect their ability to succeed in any subject. In mathematics, we are focusing our school improvement efforts on improving our students' ability in number operations and mental math.

We proudly present Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School improvement plan for your information. You will find details about what teachers will be focusing on with their students and also what teachers will be learning themselves (professional development) in order to make achievement of our school goals a reality for the students.

School Goals

Literacy Goals

We have two Literacy goals at Ecole St. Joseph's A. McKay School.

One literacy goal is to improve student achievement in the area of reading; specifically to improve fluency, accuracy, time and engagement during independent reading.

Strategies:

- teachers use the Reading Workshop model (Teaching in Action-DOEResource)
- teachers use explicit instruction to teach reading strategies (gradual release of responsibility model)
- teachers engage in frequent teacher/student conferencing
- teachers use individual assessment (CAP, running records) to develop a learning profile of students beginning in Grade Primary and continuing through Grade 6
- literacy infusions are carried out in Primary and Grade 1 French and English classrooms.

Our other literacy goal is to improve the quality and quantity of student writing, focusing specifically on

ideas, organization, and conventions.

Strategies:

- The Writing Workshop approach is used in all classrooms.
- teachers use explicit writing instruction (gradual release of responsibility model) to develop writing skills.
- all teachers engage in student-teacher conferencing to monitor student progress.

Mathematics Goal

Using a school-based assessment, students will show progress and ongoing improvement in their ability to perform applications of numbers and operation concepts.

Strategies:

- to ensure that our classrooms are adequately equipped with mathematics material
- to ensure that our classroom teachers have the required curriculum documents and supporting documents to align instruction with outcomes
- teachers are supporting instruction through the use of manipulatives

- introduce common mathematics language
- teachers incorporating the 5 Representations in instruction and assessment.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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