

Sir John A. Macdonald High



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School and Community Context

Sir John A. Macdonald High School (SJA) has a student population of approximately 1000 students. It is located in Upper Tantallon and serves the communities of Beechville, Lakeside, Timberlea, as well as the Upper Tantallon, Hubbards and St. Margaret's Bay area. Over the next few years our student population will be in the 950 range but is expected to eventually grow to between 1000 and 1100 students. Our staff consists of 1 principal, 2 vice principals, 54 teachers, 10 educational program assistants (EPA), 1 library support specialist and 2 secretaries.

We constantly strive to offer our students programs which will meet their diverse needs. In addition to the regular Department of Education prescribed courses in English and French Immersion, we also offer advanced placement (AP) courses at the Grade 12 level in English, cal-

culus, biology, physics, chemistry and computer programming. We offer the Options and Opportunities (O2) program in grades 10-12 and this year for the first time credit recovery. SJA has a fabulous fine arts program and showcases the student talent through our arts gala, improv team, band concerts and our annual musical. Our school's contribution towards a productive community is appreciated.

In addition to our excellent academic program, SJA prides itself on the many co-curricular and extracurricular programs. Students have plenty of opportunities to participate in sports teams of various levels, leadership programs, environmental clubs and multicultural activities, to name a few. One of the comments often heard from those people who visit SJA is how happy the students and staff are and what a welcoming climate the school has.



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Family and Community Involvement

SJA is a proud part of this community. Over 90% of parents feel welcome at the school and see the school as inviting parent/guardian and community involvement. All teachers ensure that families and community members feel welcome and often invite community guest speakers into their classes. Over 75% of parents feel appreciated by school staff when they are able to help. The Masthead News frequently brings news of SJA's activities and accomplishments into the homes of our community.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Students, parents and teachers alike believe that SJA is a safe place to learn. The vast majority of teachers, parents and students feel they are treated equally regardless of race. SJA offers a variety of programs designed to encourage diversity and cross-cultural understanding, which includes an annual full day inclusive language conference for all Grade 10 students. Suspension rates have been on a steady decline for the past

three years (67 suspensions in 2006-07, 63 suspensions in 2007-08 and a total of 58 suspensions in 2008-09).

Positive Effective Behavioural Supports (PEBS) was introduced this past year at SJA. Our matrix is in every classroom and students have been made aware of the behaviour that is expected in the school. We focused on cell phone usage, language and litter as the top three areas for this year.

Provincial Assessment Results

Nova Scotia examinations (NSE) in Mathematics 12, Advanced Mathematics 12, English 12 and English/Communications 12 are designed and administered by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. These examinations are administered at the end of each semester in January and June. As with all provincial examinations, the pass mark is 50 percent. The examination counts as 30 percent of the students' final course mark. Classroom assessment makes up the other 70 percent. Please note that the percentages used throughout this report are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Assessment	School Results: Percentage of students who had an exam mark of 50% or above	Board Results: Percentage of students who had an exam mark of 50% or above	School Results: Percentage of students who had a course mark of 50% or above	Board Results: Percentage of students who had a course mark of 50% or above
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: Mathematics	47%	45%	90%	83%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: Advanced Mathematics	78%	62%	96%	93%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: English	97%	94%	98%	97%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: English Communications	96%	88%	90%	95%

Advanced Placement (AP) Program	
Total enrollment in AP courses in our school	60
Percentage of students who wrote AP exams in our school	95%
Percentage of students who achieved a score of 3 or higher in AP exams in our school.	37%

We continue to see an increase in student enrollment for our Advanced Placement Program. This year, one of our students received the distinction of AP Scholar with Honour for achievement on four AP exams.

Classroom Assessment

Focus on LITERACY:

Teachers have worked to increase the teaching of reading strategies outside of the traditional English classes and to include these literacy skills in the assessment activities. Many of our professional development (PD) days over the past few years have been dedicated in developing teachers' knowledge and understanding of reading strategies and how they can be used in the various classrooms to help students in their reading comprehension. We can see the impact that these practices have on student achievement when we look at the results of the provincial exam for English 12 and English Communications 12. SJA students taking the English 12 and English Communications 12 have scored on average higher than the HRSB average.

Focus on MATHEMATICS:

Teachers have met regularly in grade-level teams to review students' work and tests in order to identify areas of strengths and frequent difficulties. From this analysis, teachers implemented Fundamental Friday, a period of time given to the review of basic skills and mathematical concepts that are at the root of the students' difficulties in math class. Teachers have also worked together to create common assessment tools. Students, from various classes have studied the same concepts at the same time and have been assessed with the identical activities and tests. This approach made it easier for both students and teachers to understand where further work was needed and how help could be given. Results in recent years from our provincial exams have been very rewarding. In both Math 12 and Advanced Math 12 exam averages and percentage of students passing the exam exceed both the HRSB and the provincial averages. Furthermore, the exam average in Math 12 showed a 16% improvement over the previous year.



Student Engagement

There are many opportunities for student engagement at SJA both in the curricular and extra-curricular areas. Students have an opportunity to participate in over 30 sports teams and clubs in a number of interest areas including drama, music, business, science, community service and athletics.

Students report feeling engaged at SJA with 81% of students reporting that “on most days, I try my best in school” and 85% of students reporting that “I can do well in school” on our most recent survey. On the same survey, 57% of our students report that they try their best with the vast majority of those students doing this because they and their parents want good grades.

Time to Learn

SJA follows the Time to Learn requirements set by the Department of Education. This means that each course or subject has a required recommended number of minutes. SJA’s daily schedule has four 75 instructional minute periods in a day. To reduce potential interruptions to classes, this past year we limited the number of announcements made throughout the day to just one time period at 10:30. We feel this has reduced the number of interruptions during class time significantly.

Professional Development

Like students at SJA, teachers as learners are trying to do things better. Once our data has shown how students are doing, the teachers’ job is to work on those areas of challenge to improve classroom instruction and student learning. Our PD is closely linked to what areas of learning need improvement. For our literacy goal of improving student writing, both English teachers and subject area teachers will receive PD on ways to increase writing opportunities, how to give effective feedback during the writing process, and ways to measure writing competence and student growth. Teachers meet regularly in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to assess progress and fine-tune practices. Our literacy coach and math coach give further support to teachers in the classroom.

Additional School Supports

Sir John A Macdonald High is fortunate to have a variety of personnel who work as additional supports to improve student achievement:

- Learning Centre teachers
- educational program assistants
- resource teachers
- mathematics coach
- literacy coach
- teen health centre nurse
- guidance counsellors
- social worker
- psychologist
- English second language (ESL) teachers
- library support specialist
- peer tutors
- RCMP liason officer
- academic support room
- school advisory council
- student services consultant
- technology support services
- parent volunteers

All departments offer extra supports to students as needed.

Graduation Rates

School Year	Rate
2008-2009	89.2%
Destination after high school	Rate
Community College	16%
University	45%
Other education or training	0%
Join work force	12%
Unknown	27%

Planning for Improvement

This year, Sir John A. Macdonald began year one of the Planning for Improvement process toward accreditation. We began an internal assessment of what is offered to students both academically and socially. We take a lot of pride in challenging our delivery of programs and making students the centre of our goals and activities at school.

Our PD during the 2008-09 academic year was focussed on collecting data from the self-assessment, reviewing the data from the self-assessment and the HRSB surveys, provincial assessments, school-based assessments and various focus groups. What we have discovered in the data is our math department has seen meaningful improvement, both within the structure and the collaboration of the teachers and in the results demonstrated by students'

grades. With the help and facilitation of our math coach, the teachers have developed a new understanding of assessment, the usage of technology and the effectiveness of working in a PLC.

Working with the development of literacy strategies across the curriculum has been an ongoing goal for us at SJA. As a result we have seen an increase in the reading strategies employed by teachers through the collaboration with our literacy coach.

Even though we are seeing a lot of success, we feel there is still room for improvement in the math and literacy areas. As a result, our goals for the next two years are presented below.

School Goals

LITERACY Goal

Students will demonstrate improvement in multi-genre writing as a demonstration of their learning across the curriculum.

Strategies:

- All teachers will provide students opportunities to write a variety of texts (including, but not limited to reports, literature responses, narrative accounts, narrative procedures, persuasive essay, reflective essay, observational essay, fiction writing, journal entries, drama, poetry, letters, brochures, interviews, and proposals).
- Teachers will increase multi-genre writing across the curriculum and implement strategies to improve students' writing as a demonstration of their learning.
- All teachers will provide a variety of genres of readings in their courses.
- All teachers will clearly articulate expectations in advance and co-create specific criteria with students for evaluating writing tasks.

- Subject area teachers will incorporate common guidelines and assessments for key pieces of writing.
- Language arts teachers will incorporate instructional frameworks, such as writing workshop, with a focus on writing in a variety of genres and purposes.
- Teachers will expose students to a variety of writing samples representing a variety of levels of proficiency.

MATHEMATICS Goal

Students will demonstrate improvement in the areas of fraction concepts and operations.

Strategies:

- Mathematics teachers will develop common assessments that emphasize fraction concepts and operations pertinent to each grade level and will emphasize these concepts in instruction and regular classroom assessments.
- Mathematics teachers will meet to analyze the results of common assessments to determine the

effectiveness of strategies.

- With the support of the math coach, all teachers will use PLCs to come to a common understanding and share strategies of fractional concepts in various subject areas.
- Mathematics teachers will use curriculum mapping as it relates to fraction concepts and operations at each grade level and will use this information to develop common teaching strategies.
- For each department Fundamental Fridays will include common activities emphasizing fraction skills pertinent to each grade level.
- Teachers will implement strategies that will enable students to improve in the area of fraction concepts and operations. This may include, but is not limited to, fraction forms as they appear in equations, exponents, expressions and trigonometry and other forms such as percentages, measurement, ratio, proportion, scales and estimation.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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