

Saint Mary's Elementary



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School and Community Context

Welcome to Saint Mary's Elementary School (SMES)! We are located in the heart of Halifax neighboring both the south end and the thriving downtown core. Our dynamic school population is made up of children from our community and those from outside our community.

We have a population of 115 culturally diverse, energetic students from grades primary to 6. Our school has six classrooms enabling us to have smaller class sizes. This allows teachers and other staff opportunities to build cohesion with families, students and our greater school community.

We have a committed, dedicated staff consisting of six classroom teachers, resource, music, core French, physical education, an art, band and strings teacher, completing the full and holistic curriculum offered here at SMES. We have support personnel including a speech/

language pathologist, psychologist, social worker, English second language (ESL) and community outreach worker.

Our location permits us the fortune of being able to travel to places within walking distance of our school that provide many learning opportunities. Such places include Discovery Centre, Neptune Theatre, museums and City Hall to name a few.

Our school population is diverse. We have over 25 countries represented with students from all corners of the world such as Ukraine, Japan and Brazil. We have a high population of ESL students who receive regular support from our ESL teacher and community outreach worker.

Our facility is small and quaint giving students a "home away from home."



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Family and Community Involvement

For the past 3 years, the majority of parents/guardians surveyed agreed they feel welcome at our school. When they are able to help with school activities/events, 92% feel appreciated by school staff. However, for the past 3 years, parents/guardians have felt the school could encourage their participation more. We are working on ways to invite family/community involvement in school activities through events such as spring fair and multicultural potluck evening. Notices are sent home, put in the newsletter & on the website.

Safe and Orderly Environment

At SMES we strive to create a positive and inviting school climate. Our Positive Effective Behavior Supports (PEBS) program here at school actively engages all students to take part and be acknowledged for their positive contributions in meeting behavior expectations. As well, we have weekly and monthly "gotcha" draws and monthly student of the month assemblies honoring students for academic accomplishments.

Based on survey information, 96% of parents feel their child's school is a safe place to learn, work and visit. The majority of parents (87%) feel they receive regular communication about activities at school and 85% feel their child's school has a positive learning environment and that their children are treated with respect.

With regards to safety, all visitors are required to use our sign in binder and badges when visiting our school.

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: 90% English Reading Fluently: 70%	English Reading Accurately: 74% English Reading Fluently: 67%
Grade 3 Provincial	Reading: 91% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 73% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%	Reading: 81% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%
Grade 5 Board	Reading: 95%	Reading: 81%
Grade 6 Provincial	Reading: 100% Writing: 100%	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: 100%	Mathematics Concepts: 95%
Grade 3 Provincial	Mathematics Concepts: 88%	Mathematics Concepts: 71%
Grade 5 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 85%	Mathematics Concepts: 84%

SMES students participated in provincial and board-wide assessments. Information gained through these assessments help us determine our next steps toward improving student achievement in literacy and mathematics. At SMES we are pleased to report that our students have consistently performed well in reading and mathematics in Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) and Department of Education (DOE) literacy and mathematics assessments. Our students are above the average assessment results compared to the overall board results in terms of percentage of students meeting performance expectations. Way to go students and staff of Saint Mary's Elementary School!

Based on the data from the chart above, there are a few areas of concern where we will focus our instructional, assessment and evaluation practices during the next few years. Our goals for the following year have been created based on information from this data. In our literacy assessments, data indicates that we need to focus on fluency, which is why we developed our comprehension goal. By having comprehension skills as the focus of instructional improvement over the next few years, we can get to the fluency component in our assessments and improve student success.

A point to note from the above table, is that our writing score for informational writing is low as well (73%) and this will be an area of focus in future. We have chosen to focus on reading first as these skills transfer to writing. As we continue to focus on student achievement, staff will be involved in professional development sessions. These sessions will focus on instruction and assessment and evaluation practices related to student progress and success in curriculum as well as their social and personal development.

Classroom Assessment

Our classroom assessment data is collected systematically throughout the year and assists teachers in understanding academic needs of their students. Teachers are required to collect school-based common assessment data based on given criteria at three intervals throughout the year. Not only does this data assist teachers with their instructional/assessment practices, this also assists in understanding where students are at given times with their learning and what needs to be done to assist them with their learning. The key with these common assessments is that the information collected is based on curriculum outcomes and that the information collected is based on our literacy and mathematics goals related to our planning for improvement (PFI) focus.



Student Engagement

Students at SMES are involved and actively engaged in many school-based activities. The school continuously provides activities for students that assist in meeting children's academic, social and emotional development. Examples are: MUSIQ, canteen/Grade 6 business, running club, reading buddies, PEBS, gotcha draws, spring fair, monthly assemblies, track and field meet, grand-friends program, band/violin/choir, Roots of Empathy, family dance night, Peer Helpers, Green Team, intramurals, Multicultural Fair, ice cream social, student of the month assemblies, curriculum night.

Time to Learn

All schools in the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) follow the Time to Learn requirements set by the Department of Education in order to meet the curriculum outcomes in the Public School Program. Each subject has a required/recommended number of minutes of instruction to be taught each week. Data results indicate that 81% of parents feel school events focus on curriculum learning and student achievement. Also, teacher survey data last year indicated that 80% of teachers felt student learning time is not impacted by interruptions. All data from provincial, HRSB and school assessments indicate progress in meeting our PFI goals in math and literacy.

Professional Development

When teachers learn, students learn. Teachers at SMES are actively involved in PD on an ongoing basis. Our literacy and math coaches support teachers two days/week to incorporate effective teaching strategies. During school-based PD days staff have been focused on PFI goals and directly aligning these goals with instruction. Also, staff have engaged in assessment and evaluation PD with our focus on data analysis and aligning instructional practices with PFI goals in literacy and math. Teachers meet in professional learning communities (PLCs) twice a month which provides time for staff to collaborate and reflect on instructional and assessment practices and how to continually improve practices to best meet the needs of our students. This is valuable professional time to discuss particular strategies and resources to improve the quality of teaching in classrooms.

Additional School Supports

SMES has additional school supports available to assist students with their learning needs. We have a 100% resource teacher who assists students with specific learning outcomes in language arts and math. We have an ESL teacher who offers support with English language skills for students requiring this support. As well, our Reading Recovery teacher offers direct intervention for identified Grade 1 students requiring reading support. Our speech language pathologist assists students who are experiencing speech and/or expressive/receptive language difficulties that may impact learning. The school psychologist provides specific assessments to determine if a child has learning difficulties. Psychologists work with the school planning team to develop specific programming to meet student needs. We have access to a social worker to assist in bridging the school with outside community resources if required.



Planning for Improvement

SMES took part in our first year of the PFI process. Our plans began during our PD days where focus was centred around discussions and plans to develop our school self assessment report, which is the beginning phase to create our school PFI. This involved working in whole groups where we discussed what current practices were implemented in classrooms; what current classroom assessment tools were utilized in assessing student learning in class and what data looked like surrounding student improvement. From initial analysis of data we found students were doing consistently well at school. However, there were some areas of concern in language arts comprehension and mathematics problem solving with number operations. This would create our goals for the school year.

These goals are specifically listed in the section below. As we continued with data analysis we found information related to instructional and assessment practices. In addition to school PD, our school PFI team attended sessions on assessment and evaluation. This was important in assessing where we would need to go with assessment and evaluation and instructional practices. We collaborated, shared and analyzed data and determined the focus of our goals. We discussed the areas of focus and what this means for our teaching practices. We are committed to ensuring the best assessment and evaluation practices are used so we can provide the best possible instruction for our students.

School Goals

Literacy Goal - Students will demonstrate improvement in literacy by focusing on comprehension.

Strategies: Teachers will: use inventory information to update/ purchase materials to meet goal; utilize Literacy Coach to assist staff, model strategies, develop reading activities and assessment practices, focus instructional practices on comprehension (critical thinking, retelling, inferencing & synthesizing; create mini lessons to support student learning in comprehension & critical thinking through writer's/reader's workshops; use PLC time to discuss comprehension resources (PM Series, AYR, Passages); use common assessment tools to inform instructional practices of, as and for learning; reading records & comprehension rubrics developed; align school PD/PLC meetings to assist with meeting goal; utilize community members/parents as volunteers to assist in meeting goal; purchase more comprehension resources to support ESL learners & parents.

Mathematics Goal - Students will demonstrate improvement along the problem solving continuum involv-

ing number operations from grades primary to 6. **Strategies:** 1. Create common understanding of number operations through problem solving strategies & how they are applied (focus on operations by creating common understanding of what constitutes problem solving questions; develop common methods/strategies of instruction of number operations for problem solving; develop curriculum map of problem solving outcomes & number operations); 2. Identify problem solving resources involving number operations (use inventory info to update/purchase materials to meet goal; PLC meetings focusing on math cafes to provide teachers with time to discuss problem solving resources involving number operations & how they will be used in classes; purchase resources to support ESL learners & parents; utilize Math Coach to support & assist staff in accessing resources to meet our goal); 3. Implement specialized Math vocabulary for problem solving strategies (focus on number operations in journal writing; build common vocabulary used in problem solving questions involving number operations; use Math 'Word

Walls"); Primary -6 students will keep math journals to document understanding of problem solving strategies involving number operations; PLC meetings focus on development of journal questions & other prompts; common assessment rubrics; Math Coach to provide specific PD related to math journaling, including graphic organizers & templates for journal writing; CAT3 Rubric provided as a sample for teachers in assessment of journals; 4. Model various problem solving strategies involving number operations & incorporate into instructional practices (identify problem solving strategies in PLC groups; align school-based PD & PLC meetings with goal; develop framework for upper/lower elementary to assist with problem solving approaches & other scaffolds related to number operations; implement a variety of modeling strategies to represent problem solving using number operations; develop grade level common assessment tools in problem solving specific to number operations.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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