

St. Stephen's Elementary



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School and Community Context

St. Stephen's Elementary School (SSES) has a wondrous and unique history. It was built on a cranberry bog, near the community of Africville in 1948. Our enrollment is 216 students from Grades Primary to Six. SSES is located in the north end of Halifax and is viewed as the "hidden gem". Our school reflects the diverse socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of our community. This diversity lends itself to a rich school climate. Our school is increasingly representative of the global community and we are constantly striving to enhance our student body's awareness and acceptance of all individuals.

Our school mission statement reads ; "St. Stephen's is committed to being a safe, peaceful and nurturing community, where mutual respect among adults and students is practiced, in which all students can develop their intellectual, social,

emotional, physical and creative potential in preparation for lifelong learning and success". Staff and students hold this mission statement in high regard and put it into practice on a daily basis.

We have an abundance of initiatives that we celebrate. Projects such as the Cranberry Bog Project, 4C's Outdoor Classroom Project, 4C's Kitchen Project, Gardening Project and various programs to support the arts are wonderful examples of how we enhance the already existing qualities of our school.

We continue to work towards maintaining our high quality education through the various initiatives put in place by the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB). As you read this report, you will see how our pride, hard work and determination is the premise of our many successes.

Safe and Orderly Environment

At SSES, we believe in creating a peaceful, inclusive environment. Our survey results indicate that our students, staff, and parents/guardians feel our school is a safe and inviting learning environment. We are proud to report that 86% of parents/guardians feel that their child's school is a safe place everyday. In addition, 92% of our students at SSES feel that there is always an adult that they can go to when they need someone to talk to.

Initiatives implemented that promote positive and respectful choices in our school include Peer Mediation, Playground Activity Leaders, Roots of Empathy, Leadership Program, Gotcha's, Friday Phone Calls, Stars of the Month Assemblies, Behavioural Programming, Girl Talk, and Positive Effective Behavior Supports.



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Family and Community Involvement

SSES is a true community school rooted in tradition where successive generations continue to attend. Survey results indicate that 100% of parents/guardians feel that SSES invites family and community involvement. Also, 98% feel welcome at our school. SSES has a very active PTA and School Advisory Council (SAC). A strong partnership has been fostered with our neighbor, Nova Scotia Community College. As well, we have a large volunteer base including retired teachers, grandparents, and university students.

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: 77% English Reading Fluently: 70%	English Reading Accurately: 74% English Reading Fluently: 67%
Grade 3 Provincial	Reading: 90% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 84% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 97%	Reading: 81% Writing (Information/Non-fiction) : 82% Writing (Narrative/Fiction) : 82%
Grade 5 Board	Reading: 79%	Reading: 81%
Grade 6 Provincial	Reading: 85% Writing: 94%	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: 93%	Mathematics Concepts: 71%
Grade 5 Board	Mathematics Concepts: 69%	Mathematics Concepts: 84%

In literacy, the students of St. Stephen's scored quite well in comparison to the HRSB overall percentages. We are proud of our students and acknowledge their hard work on a regular basis. The Planning for Improvement (PFI) survey results indicate that 98% of students see themselves as good readers and 85% see themselves as good writers.

In mathematics, although our scores remain high in some grade levels, we recognize that there is work to be done across the grade levels to maintain a high interest in math. Survey results show that 77% of students feel that they are good at math. As a school, we have been able to point out the areas that need further support and we are very confident that our students will improve.

Classroom Assessment

Teachers of St. Stephen's recognize the importance of ongoing student assessment and evaluation. Our school feels it is necessary to create common assessment tools in the areas of literacy and mathematics as these are the two important areas our school plan focuses on. Teachers work in Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) to develop, implement and review student common assessments in mathematics and reading. It is necessary to use comparative data to identify areas of strength and specific areas requiring additional support. In PLC's, teachers engage in developing common assessments, organizing and collecting data. We are proud to report that due to our organized format, we are now able to identify trends in data and compare year to year results. This year, PLC's are using 2008-2009 data to influence instruction as well as to provide support and enrichment to our students. We would like to highlight a few of our teacher responses based on the 2008-2009 Planning for Improvement survey:

- 100% of teachers provide effective assessment strategies in support of our PFI goal in literacy and mathematics
- 100% of teachers give each student a variety of opportunities to demonstrate curriculum outcomes
- 92% of teachers embed literacy skills in their subject area(s)
- 77% of teachers embed math skills in their subject area (s)



Student Engagement

St. Stephen's is an active school where students are engaged not only in their academic work but also in various extracurricular activities including intramurals, skipping, peer mediation, leadership, and choir. One hundred percent of our students try their best in school because they want to get good grades. Our students also feel confident about their abilities in most subject areas. Ninety-eight percent feel that they are a good reader; however we would like to see improvement in the percentage of students who feel they are good at math. Ninety-two percent of students surveyed feel their school has high academic standards and 95% of students like going to school.

Time to Learn

All schools in the Halifax Regional School Board follow the Time to Learn requirements set by the Department of Education (DOE). At St. Stephen's we value instructional time and strive to keep interruptions to a minimum. The 2006-2007 Planning for Improvement survey results reported that 69% of teachers felt that student learning was rarely interrupted by student discipline and 46% by non-instructional activities. The 2008-2009 survey results show a positive increase with 85% of teacher respondents feeling that student learning was rarely interrupted.

Professional Development

Professional development is highly valued by the staff at St. Stephen's. It is very important to our staff to take advantage of the professional development opportunities given by the HRSB, DOE, or other outside agencies/organizations. SSES staff are actively involved in professional development on a regular basis. Our staff strives to maintain a high quality of education. This is evident by the knowledge shared between colleagues regarding information related to the needs of our school. This year, our school based professional development days focused on our school's plan for improvement as this is the focus of the Halifax Regional School Board. Along with the school based professional development sessions, teachers have committed themselves to additional professional development including technology, Find A Balance in Literacy (FAB), Evergreen Outdoor Classroom, Solution Tree conferences, IPP Modules, Autism Awareness, and race relations to name a few.

Additional School Supports

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

- English as a Second Language
- speech language pathologist
- learning center teacher
- resource teacher
- educational program assistants (EPA's)
- guidance counsellor
- math mentor
- literacy coach
- school psychologist
- secretary
- Reading Recovery teacher
- library support specialist
- school social worker
- music specialists
- art specialist
- physical education specialist
- core French teacher
- school liaison officer
- school health nurse
- excel program



Planning for Improvement

St. Stephen's will officially begin its Planning for Improvement process in 2009-2010. It is our pleasure to share that we have worked hard this year to compile and organize our existing data in preparation for the Planning for Improvement process. At St. Stephen's, we take great pride in our students success and although there is much to celebrate at our school, we have identified areas in literacy and math that require further improvement.

Our student achievement data indicates that our students could benefit from a more intensive focus on comprehension in reading. We are working towards students being knowledgeable of all the components of comprehension in order to fully understand the text they are reading. Our goal will be supported by utilizing our resources that

are provided to our school.

In mathematics, we have discovered our school will need to focus on improving student ability to problem solve and communicate their reasoning. These skills allow students to develop meaningful connections to math concepts and apply their understanding to the world around them.

We include all staff in our school plan and we work together to support one another in reaching our goals. In support of this statement, survey results show that 84% of teachers feel they are actively involved in data collection and analysis related to our PFI.

School Goals

Literacy Goal

Students will improve reading comprehension by learning how to apply the strategies of connections, visualization, questioning, inferring, and synthesizing. Comprehension will be assessed using school based rubrics for each comprehension area.

Teachers will participate in professional development delivered by the literacy coach. Teachers will further develop their knowledge of the components of comprehension:

- making connections
- questioning throughout a text
- inferring when reading the text
- visualizing parts of a text
- monitoring comprehension and creating assessments
- synthesizing
- analyzing information of a text
- sampling and gathering from a text
- determining importance in a text.

Grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will continue and teachers will work together to develop grade level rubrics for comprehension and develop a common pre-test

and post-test assessment.

- PLCs will review the results of the school wide, board, provincial and national assessments to inform extended instruction.
- Teachers will be assigned selected readings relevant to their teachings.

In practicing these strategies, teachers will become more aware and actively engaged in the critical literacy process and will use these strategies towards students becoming effective readers.

We believe that we will accomplish our goal and see progression with our students in the area of comprehension.

Math Goal

Students will improve student achievement of the operational outcomes (B strand of the specific curriculum outcomes) for addition and subtraction of whole numbers and decimals per grade level expectations.

To support this goal, we have a number of strategies:

- Grade level PLC's will continue in order to review the targeted

outcomes. Following this, teachers will work together to develop a grade level rubric for each computational outcome to be used for a common pre-test and post-test assessment

- PLC's will review the results of the common assessments to inform extended instruction.
- PLC's and individual teachers will receive additional support with our math coach to discuss results and discuss strategies to inform the next steps in instruction.
- Teachers will become familiar with the math manipulatives and professional reading resources provided in our math room.
- Our school will continue with regular math committee meetings. Committee members are representative of both lower and upper elementary level staff. This committee supports instruction of targeted outcomes and plans any professional development that may be needed to achieve the outlined math goal.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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