

Sackville High



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School and Community Context

Sackville High School (SHS) is located in Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia and is part of the Halifax Regional Municipality. It is one of sixteen high schools in the Halifax Regional School Board. The building sits along the edge of the rocky, tree surrounded First Lake and the lot is adjacent to the Sackville Sports Stadium. The school and stadium share driveways to enter and exit the area.

Sackville High School opened in 1972. Throughout the 37 year history of the building, Sackville High has been home not only to the students who reside in the area, but it has also served many other communities of learners during their time of need. This spirit of generosity and the ability to accommodate others has been the outstanding characteristic of the school community and is the core value of Sackville High School.

Sackville High is truly representative of a community school. In or-

inary times, this school opens its doors on a daily basis to the adult community on evenings and weekends for recreational activities, night classes, or just a gathering place for a special event. There is a gymnasium that is the size of three full size cross courts with drop down curtains that the larger space separates into three smaller gymnasiums. The school doors are open every evening and weekend to community and school groups who utilize our space.

The Sackville High emblem is the Kingfisher and our mascot is named Dudley. According to legend, Kingfishers are known to provide calming waves so that new life can take route safely. We believe that the adaptability and resilience of our students reflects the Kingfisher profile.



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Family and Community Involvement

Sackville High has a longtime connection with local businesses, and we appreciate the support they give us in our Cooperative Education, Learning Centre, and Options and Opportunities classes.

We also appreciate the support we have been offered for Hire-a-Grad, the First Lake Cleanup, and the First Lake Ecology Project.

Although we have tremendous support for our sports teams and our athletic coaches, we need to invite more parents and community members into our classrooms.

Safe and Orderly Environment

In 2008-09, Sackville High School embraced the Positive Effective Behaviour Supports (PEBS) as part of our overall vision of social justice. As part of this we have been able to find alternatives to out-of-school suspensions for all but the most serious behaviours. We have observed a slow, steady drop in suspension rates even while withdrawing fewer students. The top negative behaviours as observed by teachers are:

- arriving late for class
- absent from class
- defiance
- cell phone use outside the cafeteria
- disrupting the learning environment.

A focus for next year will be to create a positive atmosphere in our classrooms from the first day onward.

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	55%	45%	96%	83%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: Advanced Mathematics	65%	62%	93%	93%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: English	95%	94%	98%	97%
Grade 12 DOE Nova Scotia Exam: English Communications	77%	88%	100%	95%

In 2008-09, students at Sackville High participated in the following provincial exams: English 12, English Communications 12, Mathematics 12, and Advanced Mathematics 12.

Last year was an excellent year for our students' Math 12 and Advanced Math 12 provincial exams: our results improved on both exams with the greatest gains occurring in Math 12, the course with the greatest number of students. This was possible in part because math teachers began offering evening study sessions in the days leading up to the exam.

We had 187 students write the English 12 exam, and 26 students wrote English Communications 12. On the whole, our students performed well, although our results were down slightly from recent years. This is especially true for the ECM12 exam, although the small sample size of that group may make results unpredictable.

Classroom Assessment

The overall trend for Sackville High over the past three years has been very positive in terms of student performance: we have achieved the highest pass rates and averages in the past decade. We have also been focusing on closing the gap between the strongest and weakest students. However, our results from 2008-09 were not quite as strong as the previous year, and the gap between the weakest and strongest students widened significantly. This may be an unexpected consequence of trying harder to retain and support struggling students, but it remains a focus for improvement for next year.

We are especially proud of how we have reduced the number of students experiencing failure each semester. In 2003-2005, 28% of students would be unsuccessful in one or more classes in semester one. Last year we reduced this to 15%. We also reduced the number of students unsuccessful in one or more classes in semester two from 27% in 2003-05 to 18%.

This is partly due to the success of our academic intervention program. This program ensures that students complete all assigned work in their classes and provides assistance as needed. In 2008-09, we recovered over 5000 late or missing assignments.

Assessment is one of Sackville High School's main areas for teacher professional development. Our teachers have focused on improving assessment strategies for several years:

- In 2007, one in five teachers attended a national assessment conference, and every teacher took part in a two-day assessment conference later that year.
- In 2008-09, our goal was to apply the skills in our classrooms that we learned the previous year.
- In 2009-10, teachers will continue to work together to improve classroom assessment. We will continue to learn how to provide students with useful feedback throughout their learning process instead of just at the end.



Student Engagement

There is an overwhelming belief among our staff that Sackville High has the ability to support every student in their course work. Teachers point to the new teaching and intervention strategies they have learned as the spark for their success. Our survey tells us that our students largely feel they belong at Sackville High. Students believe their teachers expect the best from them and are most motivated by the expectations of their parents and getting good grades. The effects of poor attendance can be costly; we are proud, that due to the interventions we have in place, 98% of our students with acceptable attendance are successful in their courses.

Time to Learn

SHS follows the time guidelines set by the province. Research shows that high school students perform better later in the day. In September, we adjusted our schedule to allow for a 20 minute later start. Survey results showed that the majority of our students and teachers believe that there are too many interruptions during the school day: for example, 57% of students indicated that they were interrupted by friends communicating to them during class. Identifying and decreasing the number of interruptions while students are learning will be one of our goals for next year.

Professional Development

The 2008-09 school year was an extraordinary year for professional development. As we explored our school information, we asked ourselves ‘why aren’t all of our students engaged?’ This led to an exploration of social justice. We felt that to engage all our students, we had to connect with them. Experience tells us that when teachers learn, students learn. Our teachers have been given a rainbow of opportunities. We invited an internationally respected teacher, Barbara Coloroso, to work with us, and over 25% of teachers attended national or international-level conferences. At the same time, we recognized that one of our greatest resources has been our own staff. We arranged our 2008-09 schedule so that teachers in the same department were able to learn together more easily. As a result, we have teachers teaching each other throughout the school. In 2009-10, teachers will be working together with teachers outside their departments on techniques common to all classes.

Additional School Supports

- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA)
- behavioural support specialists
- English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher
- focus program for at-risk students
- intervention
- George
- positive effective behaviour supports (PEBS)
- severe learning disabilities (SLD) specialist
- RCMP liaison
- school psychologist
- school store
- social worker
- speech-language pathologist
- youth health centre
- community connections for coop, options and opportunities, and Learning Centre, First Lake project, First Lake clean up, Hire-a-Grad and Kinsmen mural project

Graduation Rates

School Year	Rate
2008-2009	82.3%

Destination after high school	Rate
Community College	17%
University	31%
Other education or training	5%
Join work force	17%
Unknown	30%

Planning for Improvement

The 2008-09 school year is significant in that it marks the end of a four year process in school improvement planning. Sackville High School began the school improvement process with an extensive internal review during the 2005-06 school year ending with an external review and the acceptance of a 3 year plan for improvement focusing on the following 2 goals:

- Improving Teacher Collaboration
- Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap

Our plan for improvement has guided all school based professional development during the past three years. Teachers are focused on improved student success through working together professionally to improve student and teacher learning. Efforts to close the achievement

gap between the weakest and strongest students, and raise the academic bar for everybody have centered on strategies to ensure student participation through our school-wide intervention strategies and assessment practices. Fundamental to our efforts to address student engagement was our belief that all students must participate in their learning. From this belief, Sackville High School developed an intervention policy for student participation. The essence of this strategy is that students who have not completed course work will be provided with extra time and support to ensure assignment completion.

School Goals

GOAL #1 - In three years, teacher collaboration will be improved.

Desired Results:

- All new SHS staff will engage in additional orientation in-service
- All term teachers will report positive mentoring experiences
- Department leaders will coach other teachers as part of their professional growth
- All teachers will report that the teacher appraisal process has positively impacted their classroom practices
- The school master schedule will provide teachers with opportunities for collaboration
- All teachers will indicate satisfaction with the opportunities provided to share assessment practices, teaching strategies, and classroom management techniques.

Strategies:

During orientation, all teachers will be in-serviced with regard to setting professional growth goals, identifying teachers to mentor new teachers, planning orientation activities for new teachers, developing a schedule

that allows for common collaboration time, providing professional development opportunities to school leadership teams, teacher collaboration focusing on the development of common assessment practices, lessons and targeting issues identified by examining student performance.

GOAL #2 - In three years, SHS will decrease the percentage of students who fall more than two standard deviations below the mean based on final marks.

Desired Results:

- Decrease in the percentage of students who are more than 2 standard deviations below the mean
- Decrease in loss of credit; reduction in absenteeism and unexcused absences
- Success of students who are part of a "school within a school"-100% of credit accumulation for students participating in the "school within a school" model
- 100% implementation of adaptations and IPPs
- Increase in the number of students who report satisfaction

with placement.

Strategies:

Develop appropriate transitions for students in year one and use this as the basis for decisions in creating transitions from year to year, develop a survey tool to collect data to measure student satisfaction of course selection and baseline data, develop Options and Opportunities (O2) program for 20 incoming Grade 10 students, develop school-based portfolios for O2 students, develop an in-school suspension model for students who either engage in minor code of conduct infractions, or who are not experiencing success due to attendance or incompleteness of work.

Desired Results:

Decrease the percentage of students who fall more than 2 standard deviations, reduction in absences, reduction focusing on "school within a school" initiative, positive anecdotal impact of the "school within a school" program, 100% credit accumulation, 100% implementation in 3 years, decrease in the number of students who experience improper placement.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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