

Annual Report
June 2015
Kings County Academy



Principal's Message

The 2014-15 school year came and went in what seemed like record time. If I were to pick a theme for the year it would be “change”.

Our first big change was the welcoming of our new Vice Principal Victoria Laurence. A Kentville resident, she came to us from the board office with experiences as a middle level teacher, resource teacher, and as a consultant of behaviour support. Her wealth of knowledge and skills have benefited us tremendously over the last year and she has played a major role in helping us to refine our student support programs and services, particularly in helping us manage the growing behavioural challenges that we seem to be facing in our schools.

Early in the school year, our report cards underwent major revisions so much of the fall was spent dealing with and managing those changes and providing the supports and information to staff, students, and the community to help them understand the processes and impacts. The biggest change was in the move back to percentage grades in grades 7 and 8, a result of feedback from parents across the province around reporting.

Early in 2015, the Minister of Education released “Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for Education”. This initiative is meant to make changes (some of which have already started) in four areas in the next few years:

- Build a modern education system
- Create an innovative curriculum
- Promote inclusive school environments
- Advance excellence in teaching and leadership

Already we have seen announcements for a new streamlined curriculum at grades P-3, a new provincial student code of conduct, and a new upcoming provincial homework policy. These and other initiatives all signal that continued system transformation is on the way for 2015-16 school. As a school, we will commit to helping you navigate those changes, communicating and consulting as much as we can to help ensure you understand the impact on your child and the school system in general.

Mike Ouellette, Principal

Table of Contents

Principal's Message.....	p.1
Student Achievement	p. 2
School & Community	p. 2
Professional Learning for Staff.....	p. 3
RCH Initiatives	p. 4
Safe & Caring Environment.....	p. 4
Student Involvement & Successes ..	p. 5
KCA PTA.....	p. 6



Student Achievement

Each year, our students in grades 3, 4, 6, and 8 participate in provincial and regional assessments meant to measure to what level the each has achieved in the areas of Literacy and Mathematics. The AVRSB and its 43 schools have aimed to improve in each of those areas. The starting point is for each school to determine a literacy and numeracy goal. This process is known as Continuous School Improvement (CSI). Based upon our data, as well as the data from classroom-based assessments, we will be developing 2 student achievement goals in the 2015-16 school year related to Mathematics and Literacy.

This year, our staff continued its focus on developing additional school-based literacy assessment tools that allow us to compare results across our English and French Immersion programs as well as preparing for the ongoing implementation of a new mathematics curriculum in grades P-6. We also implemented new strategies at grades 4-5 through a new board initiative, Stronger Readers and Writers which is meant to build on the successes we have seen in grades P-3. Our grade 6 math teachers participated in a new middle level math strategy that will move to grade 7 next year. It provided support for common planning and assessment.

2014-15 Provincial and Regional Assessment Snapshot

Assessment	Percentage of KCA Students Meeting/Exceeding Expectations	Average Percentage for all of AVRSB
Grade 3 Literacy		
Reading	62%	68%
Writing – Ideas	64%	76%
Writing – Org.	56%	58%
Writing – Lang. Use	53%	62%
Writing – Conv.	51%	47%
Grade 4 Math		
	77%	74%
Grade 6 Literacy		
Reading	75%	74%
Writing – Ideas	81%	76%
Writing – Org.	74%	62%
Writing – Lang. Use	77%	68%
Writing – Conv.	62%	56%
Grade 6 Math		
	70%	66%
Grade 8 Math (June 2014)		
	54%	62%
Grade 8 Lit. (June 2014)		
Reading	78%	77%
Writing – Ideas	90%	87%
Writing – Org.	75%	81%
Writing – Lang. Use	78%	83%
Writing – Conv.	74%	73%

School and Community

During the 2014 - 2015 school year, there were approximately 601 (as of June 30) students registered in Grades P-8 with 343 English program students and 258 French Immersion students. Our 69 grade primary students had a great start to the year and we are sending off 50 grade 8 students to what we know will be a great start to their Northeast Kings Education Centre as they enter grade 9.

In terms of staff, there were 46 (full-time/part-time) classroom teachers and specialists, 12 Educational Assistants, 2 secretaries, a librarian, 4 custodians, 1 vice-principal, and 1 principal.

Next year, we are fortunate to have the services of an additional half-time vice principal. Krista Parrish, who has taught grade 7 and 8 immersion at KCA for a number of years, joins us in this new role. We are very excited to have her skills and expertise on our administrative team and know she will continue to make valuable contributions to our school community.

Our school provides a variety of supports to meet the growing needs of our students including both English and French Immersion programs, a Learning Centre and Behaviour Intervention as part of our Resource department, and a variety of opportunities that we believe are vital to student success such as music, fine art, physical education, instrumental band, technology education, family studies, and exploratory activities.

Professional Learning for Staff

KCA is involved in a process of Continuous School Improvement (CSI). It is our responsibility as teachers to continuously analyze our work and to continue to improve so that we can provide meaningful learning experiences to all of our students. We organize our professional learning time to ensure that the time is used wisely in order to have the most positive impact on student achievement and school culture.

During the 2014-15 school year, teachers used professional development time to analyze and compare school-based achievement data in relation to our regional and provincial assessment results. We looked at reasons for gaps and took time to focus on how evolving curriculum and changes in instructional and assessment practices could help in closing those gaps.

Teachers in Grades P-2 continued to work on the Beginning Readers and Writers initiatives which enhanced instructional practices and supported early literacy development in our students. Teachers in Grades 3-4 did similar work through the Growing Readers and Writers initiative. Teachers in Grades 5-6 began a new initiative called Supporting Readers and Writers that extended the previous work done at the lower grades, enhancing instructional and assessment practices for teachers and helping us promote better literacy skills at the upper elementary grades. Teachers in grade 6 were introduced to the first year of a 3-year strategy to support changes in the math curriculum at grades 6-8. This will move to grade 7 next year.

Outside of math and literacy, our staff also engaged in professional development opportunities related to several other important aspects of our work with students and the community.

We used the work of Mike Rutherford to work on aspects of effective instruction across all grade levels and curriculum areas. We joined colleagues from the NKEC family of schools in planning and implementing a health and wellness day to help out teachers and support staff develop new skills and understandings related to how our overall health affects our students, families, and ourselves. As a follow-up, Dr. Kristen McLeod spent a day with our staff helping them to better understand the role early childhood trauma has on the behaviour and achievement of students

Lastly, we spent time with Ryan Hainstock learning about cloud computing and the new tools available through the new partnership with Google and the Apps for Education initiative. Teachers and students will benefit tremendously from these tools which offer a level playing for accessing information and using it to build new knowledge and skills.

School & Community (cont'd)

Many volunteers are a vital part of our KCA Community. Three great examples are Myrna Harnum and Paige and Doug Mosher, who managed our breakfast program each and every day, helping students start their learning with a healthy meal. We have many groups, parents and students who regularly support our Breakfast Program through generous donations. On behalf of all of the students and staff, a huge "thanks" to all of the volunteers who supported this and many other school activities.

As has been mentioned, our school has always had a close relationship with the Town of Kentville. We have shared facilities, offered collaborative programs, and utilized expertise that each was able to offer to the other. This year we undertook a comprehensive study of safe school travel planning in the hopes of encouraging more active transportation to and from school and as a means of understanding the various barriers and challenges faced by students and families that prevent them from walking or wheeling to school. In the long run, we hope this work will increase physical activity and cut down on traffic congestion in and around the school.



Professional Learning (cont'd)

We continue to learn to use the new features of PowerSchool and TIENET, two electronic student record systems that are helping to make the storing and sharing of information much easier. Teachers at KCA have made technology a focus of their learning to help in taking advantage of the tools that came with the new school.

Many staff are taking advantage of outside learning opportunities as they pursue master's degrees or other certificates and diplomas to upgrade their knowledge and skills with current research and best practices related to curriculum, technology, assessment and evaluation, special education, counseling, and school leadership. Mr. Ouellette was a recent graduate from the Nova Scotia Instructional Leadership Academy, a three year intensive program meant to provide administrators with the tools to be better teacher-leaders in their schools.

Race Relations, Cross Cultural Awareness and Human Rights (RCH) Initiatives

Our school values diversity and works hard to be an inclusive and respectful learning environment. At the start of our CSI process early in last year, we identified that RCH initiatives needed to be a priority based on the results of climate surveys conducted in the spring of 2012.

In 2012-13, we identified our own professional learning as a place to start and engaged in inservicing related to understanding issues of race and racism, as well as poverty. In 2013-14, we focused on moving from our own professional learning to supporting student learning and awareness.

This year, teachers continued to do explicit teaching around topics of race/racism, poverty and other social justice issues. With support from our student support worker, Tracey Clements, they learn about African Canadian history through initiatives like the study of Africville. Through the support of our RCH division, we had the services of a math/literacy support teacher who worked with students of African Descent to support their achievement and engage them in other projects. They published a wonderful book entitled "The ABCs of Us" which celebrated the local African Canadian culture and community. Our middle level students continue to be actively engaged in WE Day and Free the Children where they learn about the impacts of poverty, war, and disease on countries around the world and how simple acts in our community can help support and promote change.

Safe and Caring Environment

At KCA, we pride ourselves on being a safe and respectful environment. The foundations for this lie in our PEBS program which emphasizes the teaching and promotion of positive behaviour to all students. Teachers are engaged in effective classroom management practices that create safe, productive classroom environments. As well, in cooperation with our BIRT teacher, board staff, and our core planning team we have developed and implemented targeted supports for students with serious behaviour needs.

Our school has been active in teaching students about bullying, particularly around issues related to the more negative impacts of social media and cyberbullying. Our middle level staff engaged students in lessons about online social responsibility and appropriate use of social media tools.

Having the services of a guidance counselor has also provided tremendous support to ensuring we have a safe and supportive environment for students. Through both individual sessions and small group work, we were able to help many students (and their families) deal with peer conflict, mental health issues, and behaviour challenges. This support will continue in the coming year.

RCH (cont'd)

Students are active in fundraising and donation initiatives to support our local food banks and breakfast programs.

We had cultural presentations about music and drumming, including a wonderful presentation by Juno/ECMA nominated performer Keith Mullins who shared his knowledge of African and Caribbean drumming and music. Our students had the chance to perform with him in a whole school presentation.

Eric Crookshank, formerly of the Halifax Rainmen, presently with the Harlem Globetrotters came to our school to help spread his extremely upbeat and engaging message about standing up against bullying. Joining him was talented singer and songwriter Holly Marie who shared her heroic story of overcoming bullying to pursue her dreams as a professional recording artist.

Student Involvement and Successes

KCA students are heavily involved in many academic, leadership, artistic, and athletic activities that demonstrate their commitment to success both in and out of the classroom.

Our KODIAK team provides leadership around extra-curricular activities and school climate, helping to organize events like our “Wear Pink Day” Winter Carnival, Field Day activities, dances, fundraising campaigns, and school presentations. They play key roles in welcoming guests to our school and providing input to staff and school administration and how we can improve the school to make it an engaging place to learn.

We had a one student who put a great deal of time and energy into photographing and documenting many of the great events at KCA this year and he diligently had an updated photo-stream running through our AV system throughout the school.

Our students continue to be very successful at Face Aux Questions, winning the Immersion divisions again, a tribute to the quality and engaging language instruction happening in our French classrooms.

We have a large number of student athletes involved in cross-country, running club, volleyball, basketball, badminton, soccer, and track and field. Our grade 6-8 co-ed hockey team was able to participate in a number of small tournaments and play exhibition games against other middle schools in the Valley. We had students out skating, curling, and bowling to promote healthy physical activity and are hoping to expand on these in the coming years.

Safe and Caring Environment (cont'd)

Students continue to be active in providing leadership towards a positive school climate. Our KODIAK team plays a primary and supporting roles in setting up and leading education campaigns around bullying and respect through events like our “Wear Pink Day”, WE Day, Free the Children, food bank fundraising, and much, much more.

Through our inservicing this year, staff were exposed to the work of Dr. Kristen McLeod and her research into the impact of trauma on child development. She helped us link the causes of trauma...poverty, violence, racism...to their impacts on learning and behaviour and helped us understand how a supportive and caring school environment built around building strong relationships with students could blunt and even turn around the impact of trauma.

Promoting a positive school climate will continue to be a priority for our school and our staff as we engage in professional learning and implement new initiatives through our Continuous School Improvement process.

Our Belief Statements

Regarding learning, we believe:

- ❖ All students need to feel safe, valued, and engaged
- ❖ All students' basic needs must be met
- ❖ All students can learn and contribute
- ❖ All students' learning styles must be engaged

Regarding teaching, we believe:

- ❖ It must be inclusive

In the arts, we have very successful instrumental and jazz bands, as well as a grade 3-5 choir that is a family and community favorite at our concerts. We also have some very talented recorder players who were earning their belts as Recorder Ninjas. Some of them are even writing and performing their own music.

Parental Involvement – Parent Teacher Association

Our Parent Teacher Association was very active this year, supporting many school and classroom initiatives through their fundraising and many other types of involvement. We had 8 meetings last year with discussions that focused on a wide variety of topics such as fundraising, communication, changes to the provincial report card, and school/student assessment performance. The meetings were always very engaging and energetic with 10-15 parents and staff members committing their time to our monthly, one hour meetings.

In terms of major fundraising, we had many successful campaigns which included; Vessey Seeds, Christmas Vendor Shopping Party, the students shopping party, Rocky Mountain Christmas trees, two family movie nights, and finally our Spring Fling. We made financial contributions to every classroom through our Spring Fling fundraiser. We also provided \$2300 to the physical education program for new equipment and \$1500 to the BIRT program to help with supplies they use in their program.

Our partnership with the Town of Kentville continued and we received a donation from the Kentville and Area Youth Association to support students in involvement in extra-curricular activities and camps. We also worked with Andre Bouchard, the TOK Active Living Coordinator in support and promotion of afterschool programs like Trailblazers and initiatives such as School Travel Planning. Other programs we helped to support were the Winter Wear Recycle program, support of other AVRSB PTAs as they look for ways to be as successful as we have been, our Safe Arrival Program, and Teacher Appreciation.

In 2015-16 we will be involved with the Nourish Nova Scotia and Annapolis Valley Farm to School have come together to create a healthy fundraising opportunity for your school to sell top quality Nova Scotia grown fruit and vegetables. This fundraiser will promote local food and healthy eating. It will also provide engaging educational tools and resources in every package to help with food preparation, storage, recipes and “kids in the kitchen” ideas. Stay tuned for more information in September.

Our first meeting will be on Tuesday, Sept. 15 at 6 PM. Please join us!

Kathy Boutilier

Beliefs (cont'd)

- ❖ It must be reflective
- ❖ It must be adaptable to student needs
- ❖ It must be engaging and challenging
- ❖ It must be diverse

Regarding assessment and evaluation, we believe:

- ❖ It must be a tool to guide and promote effective instruction
- ❖ It must inform students, families, and teachers of strengths and needs
- ❖ It must be ongoing and communicated regularly to students and families
- ❖ It must be diverse including both formative and summative evidence
- ❖ It must be fair, equitable, and honest

Regarding school climate, we believe:

- ❖ All staff and students should feel safe and equally valued
- ❖ All staff and student interactions should demonstrate respect for diversity
- ❖ All interactions should aim to be positive, supportive, honest, and respectful
- ❖ All student interests and strengths are engaged and promoted

Regarding discipline, we believe:

- ❖ Appropriate behaviour must be taught
- ❖ Responses must be fair and consistent
- ❖ Students are approached on an equitable basis

Regarding leadership, we believe:

- ❖ We are all leaders
- ❖ It must be consistent with follow-through on decision-making
- ❖ It must be supportive, engaging, approachable, and understanding
- ❖ It must be open to new ideas
- ❖ It must be impartial and equitable
- ❖ It must be adaptable
- ❖ It must be present and available

Regarding community relations and communication, we believe:

- ❖ It must be ongoing, respectful, transparent, and consistent
- ❖ It must be supportive, inclusive, and understanding
- ❖ It must include acts of symbiotic service and reciprocal support