

Annual Report  
June 2014  
**Kings County Academy**



## Principal's Message

2013-14 was a year of many great collaborations for our school and our community.

We had some great examples of community support and involvement. Our new score clocks were unveiled in the fall. They are important symbols of the respect we have in our school and our extra-curricular programs and a wonderful example of how a community can turn a tragedy into a lasting symbol of pride and community support.

We also added an important communication tool to the school facility with the help of Ennis Security. Our new LCD sign has been a great addition, despite the complaints of certain sports teams being promoted! In all seriousness, we are truly grateful to have such a valuable piece of technology at our disposal. Again, one more symbol of the valuable school-community connection.

Lastly, our new playing fields were completed and we officially opened the new playground. The individuals and organizations involved put in a tremendous amount of time and energy into creating a play area that is second to none in our region. Our students have access to safe, fun and challenging equipment as well as a large green space that provides everything they need to burn off energy and explore their natural environment. We are working with the Town of Kentville on a new phase that may include a community and school garden.

Speaking of collaboration, I want to close my message with a sincere thank you to Mike Pinard and best wishes for his future as principal at St. Mary's. Mr. Pinard has been an invaluable asset to the school and community and did a lot of heavy lifting when the new school opened, helping to lay the foundations for a school that operates like a well-oiled machine. He has been a great partner in the endeavour to create a supportive and welcoming learning environment for students and the community. On behalf of the entire KCA learning community, thank you for your service to this school. The St. Mary's school community will surely benefit from your experience and dedication.

Mike Ouellette, Principal

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## 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 2014-15 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 implementation of a new mathematics curriculum in grades P-3 this year and grades 4-6 next year.

### Provincial and Regional Assessment Snapshot

| Assessment              | Percentage of KCA Students Meeting/Exceeding Expectations | Average Percentage for all of AVRSB |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Grade 3 Literacy</b> |   |                                     |
| Reading                 | 57%   | 69%                                 |
| Writing – Ideas         | 80%   | 91%                                 |
| Writing – Org.          | 63%   | 77%                                 |
| Writing – Lang. Use     | 67%   | 79%                                 |
| Writing – Conv.         | 50%   | 60%                                 |
| <b>Grade 4 Math</b>     |   |                                     |
|                         | 80%   | 75%                                 |
| <b>Grade 6 Literacy</b> |   |                                     |
| Reading                 | 62%   | 73%                                 |
| Writing – Ideas         | 86%   | 88%                                 |
| Writing – Org.          | 77%   | 79%                                 |
| Writing – Lang. Use     | 79%   | 79%                                 |
| Writing – Conv.         | 63%   | 63%                                 |
| <b>Grade 6 Math</b>     |   |                                     |
|                         | 62%   | 70%                                 |
| <b>Grade 8 Math</b>     |   |                                     |
|                         | 67%   | 56%                                 |
| <b>Grade 8 Literacy</b> |   |                                     |
| Reading                 | 74%   | 69%                                 |
| Writing – Ideas         | 98%   | 94%                                 |
| Writing – Org.          | 97%   | 86%                                 |
| Writing – Lang. Use     | 93%   | 87%                                 |
| Writing – Conv.         | 82%   | 78%                                 |

## School and Community

During the 2013 - 2014 school year, there were approximately 602 (as of June 30) students registered in Grades P-8 with 344 English program students and 258 French Immersion students. Our 63 grade primary students had a great start to the year and we are sending off 59 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 44 (full-time/part-time) classroom teachers and specialists, 10 Educational Assistants, 2 secretaries, a librarian, 4 custodians, 1 vice-principal, and 1 principal.

Victoria Laurence starts as our new Vice Principal. She comes with an extensive background in supporting students and staff with managing challenging behaviours. She has a teaching background in the middle level and has also been a resource teacher.

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.

We often use the term “family” when describing how we operate at

## 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 2013-14 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. Next year, teachers in Grades 5-6 will begin a new initiative called Supporting Readers and Writers that will extend 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.

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 had a presentation on how to support all students in understanding and managing emotional regulation. [Zones of Regulation®](#) is a systematic, cognitive behavior approach used to teach self-regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete zones. The Zones curriculum provides strategies to teach students to become more aware of, and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, managing their sensory needs, and improving their ability to problem solve conflicts.

We had a presenter from the Youth Project work with staff and students on promoting a better understanding of issues faced by LGBTQ students and how we can promote safety and reduce bullying and violence for all students at KCA.

Lastly, we ended the year looking at the use of portable technology (like iPads) in our classrooms and the use of cloud technology and applications to support student learning and provide students with exposure to the

## School & Community (cont'd)

KCA. Many volunteers are a vital part of our team approach. Two great examples are Myrna Harnum and Paige 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 had our first Great Pumpkin drop. The town brought in a lift and students designed and dropped pumpkins wrapped in very creative protection with the hopes that they would survive the fall. It was a lot of fun and we hear that an even higher lift is on the way for the event in 2014! The town also had us involved in the unveiling of a time capsule that was buried in a corner stone of the old KCA 85 years ago.



## **Professional Learning (cont'd)**

kinds of tools that are becoming ubiquitous in learning and working environments.

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. We value the concept the learning is a life-long process and that serving the needs of our students means combining the best of what is tried and true with the most current research about what works in supporting student success.

## **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. Those surveys indicated that the students and the community were unsure or unaware of the work the school had and was doing to support diverse learners and the school community as a whole.

Last year, 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. This provided staff with a chance to examine the history, causes, and challenges related to these issues and gave them a starting place to examine their own biases as well as those that might exist in curriculum and instructional practices.

This year, we focused on moving from our own professional learning to support student learning and awareness. Teachers have been doing explicit teaching around topics of race/racism, poverty and other social justice issues. Our middle level students became actively engaged in WE Day and Free the Children where they learned about the impacts of poverty, war, and disease are having on countries around the world and how simple acts in our community can help support sustainable change in the areas most affected by these issues. Students have always been

## **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.

Having the services of a guidance counselor has also provided tremendous support in ensuring

## **RCH (cont'd)**

active in fundraising and donation initiatives to support our local food banks and breakfast programs. Tracey Clements, our student support worker helped students learn about the history of Africville and made strong connections between its history and that of our local African Nova Scotian and Acadian communities.

Guest speakers from the Youth Project worked directly with students to help them understand the impact of homophobic language and bullying and provided them with a better understanding of how to treat each other with the respect and dignity we all deserve.

Savannah Simon, a young Mi'kmaq motivational speaker and dancer presented a highly engaging talk to our middle level students, sharing her perspectives and experiences on respecting traditional cultures and practices. Students were very moved by her positive energy and outlook and learned a great deal about Mi'kmaq history and culture.

## **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.

We had students involved in a second year of cultural and language enrichment through a partnership with SEVEC and an exchange trip with Drummondville Quebec.

Our KODIAK team provides leadership around extra-curricular activities and school climate, helping to organize events like our "Wear Pink Day" and our new RESPECT campaign. They play key roles in winter carnival, 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. This year they also provided time and energy as volunteers in our breakfast program and as "Dandy Apple" as part of Apple Blossom festivities throughout the Valley.

We have a large number of student athletes involved in cross-country, running club, volleyball, basketball, badminton, soccer, and track and field. We started a highly successful hockey team for grades 6-8 and hope to continue this program next year. We had students out skating, curling, and bowling to promote healthy physical activity and are hoping to expand on these in the coming years.

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

## **Safe and Caring Environment (cont'd)**

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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.

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.

concerts. We also have some very talented recorder players who were earning their belts in recorder karate!

## **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 meeting last year with discussions that focused on a wide variety of topics such as fundraising, communication, the provincial report card, and school/student assessment performance. The meetings were always very engaging and energetic with 10 parents and staff members committing their time to our monthly, one hour meetings.

In terms of major fundraising, we provided a \$3000 donation to the community effort to install new score clocks in our gymnasium. A \$5000 contribution was made to our school's middle level band program. \$5200 was given to classroom teachers to support teacher or team-based curriculum/program investments. We also made a long-term commitment to support a bursary to former KCA students graduating from NKEC and pursuing post-secondary studies.

We finally had our official opening of the playground on June with many important partners in attendance. This was a great opportunity to demonstrate our thanks and appreciation for the many in-kind and financial contributions made by the volunteers, corporate sponsors, and local government partners who helped move this from dream to reality. This equipment, along with the surrounding green space that has been developed and maintained by the Town of Kentville is undoubtedly the envy of many schools and communities.

Outside of regular meetings, we put volunteer time into our annual spring fling and barbecue, providing staff with a wonderful meals and treats as part of staff-appreciation, and setting up family dance and movie nights. These are all important events that help demonstrate our support and collaboration with the school staff, administration, and the wider community.

Our first meeting for the 2014-15 school year will be Tuesday, September 16 at 6 PM in the fine arts room. We will be holding elections for a number of positions.

Kathy Boutilier