



Astral Drive Junior High
2015-16 Community Report

Provincial Assessments		
	School (%) 2015-16	Board (%) 2015-16
<u>Literacy Assessments</u>		
Grade 8 Provincial		
Reading	77%	76%
Writing - Ideas	97%	91%
Writing - Organization	84%	80%
Writing - Language Use	86%	82%
Writing - Conventions	75%	70%
<u>Math Assessments</u>		
Grade 8 Provincial		
Mathematics	67%	63%

Please see our School Improvement Plan (SSP) for more detailed information and results.

Provincial Assessments Results – Literacy and Mathematics

The students at Astral Drive Junior High are performing better than the Board average for the Grade 8 Provincial Assessment. In reading we did slightly better with 77% of our students meeting expectations. When writing, an outstanding 97% of our students were able to generate ideas. When it comes to organization, and language use, a high percentage of our students performed well. An area for improvement would be conventions such as spelling, punctuation and other grammatical issues.

The students at Astral Drive Junior High are performing 4% better than the Board average for the Grade 8 Provincial Mathematics Assessment. This information is positive and falls in line with recent results over the past number of years. While this may seem to be encouraging, this data also reveals that 33% of students did not meet expectations on this assessment. A further exploration of the data reveals that 127 of 129 students at Astral almost met, met, or exceeded expectations, and a continued focus on the 41 students at level 2 (almost meeting) will produce high yield results. A deeper and directed look at these students and their areas of need will help to close the gap and move these students towards meeting expectations.

What professional learning did your teachers engage in during the 2015-16 school year?

The staff at Astral Drive Junior High School continues to be deeply entrenched in improving their teaching to directly impact and improve student learning. Our school continues to work diligently within our Student Success Plan which focuses efforts to improve reading through critical thinking, to improve mathematical problem solving, mathematical communication and effective assessment practices.

In 2015-16, Astral Drive Junior High School was actively engaged in examining our understanding of problem solving and critical thinking, and we are implementing strategies to incorporate ways to bring this to life across all subject areas.

Teachers at Astral Drive Junior High School participated in several professional learning opportunities this year, including:

- All staff meetings and school based professional development days focused on connecting our

math and literacy goals to effective assessment practices, including but not limited to, shared assessment practices (provided examples of effective assessment tools, co-constructed samples, tools, etc.).

- We continued work with our 1-4 system – involving students, continued with level 4 questions in planning & best practices in assessment. (COP), Work in PLC's subject areas to develop curriculum mapping; developing a "Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum"
- All math teachers received 2 days of training in the new math curriculum.
- Teachers underwent training related to the use of Google Classroom and Google platform, and some began to examine its mathematical applications
- Two of our teachers participated in the HRSB Rubric Lead Team, assisting in the creation of board-wide common rubrics for each of the outcomes in Mathematics.
- Resource teachers attended Leaps and Bounds training session
- Google Sites & Forms (HRSB)
- Provincial Conference (NSTU in October)
- FLA & ELA Teachers had Literacy PD at the Board
- FLA Teachers had a literacy coach for 5 weeks
- Literacy team planned a School wide unit on "Civil Rights" with guest speaker Ruby Bridges concluding the unit at a school wide student assembly.
- Rev, Anderson presentation about cultural competency
- Some grade 9 teachers participated in IEI-E (Board)

Through reflection and feedback, teachers felt as though they were more mindful and confident providing critical thinking and problem solving learning opportunities for students.

Teachers have focused efforts this year on creating effective tools to collect evidence of student learning through conversation and observation, along with product (COP). Also, incorporating technology through the adoption of Google Apps for Education (GAFE), and have reported higher rates of engagement and collaboration through the use of this technology and effective assessment practices. Teachers have received Professional Development to become more familiar with GAFE, and the adoption of this technology has been widespread and has spanned all departments within the school.

What changes have you seen in instructional and assessment practices?

Staff have also explored the use of formative assessment and have shared examples of formative assessment across the curriculum. Staff have engaged in professional learning that has strengthened their understanding of formative assessment, such as the inclusion of Conversation and Observation, and how this type of assessment helps to guide teacher practice and improve student achievement. Through the focus on problem solving and differentiation, students have learned to become more independent in their learning, and less reliant on teachers as 'keepers' of information. There has been a shift in teaching practice to accept multiple ways of arriving at answers, and this shift from teaching to learning has empowered students to take more responsibility for their learning.

There has been an increased use of technology, including Google Classroom, which has allowed both staff and students to diversify teaching and learning.

Over the course of the implementation of our plan, we have seen dramatic differences in the way teachers are approaching teaching and learning. Some of the biggest changes include:

- Teachers are incorporating critical thinking skills in all subject areas;
- Teachers are using consistent language around critical literacy skills and its evaluation in all subject areas;
- Teachers are demonstrating an understanding of the connection between problem-solving (our numeracy goal) and critical thinking;
- Teachers have collaborated in order to develop strategies to consistently use co-construction of criteria, exemplars
- Curriculum has been mapped in all subject areas to ensure that teachers can scaffold instruction so that students are progressing from year-to-year in the development of their skills and learning;
- Teachers are beginning to implement reflection and goal-setting as part of their regular practice;

and

- Teachers are using a workshop mode to target and address gaps in learning and to guide their teaching practice.
- Using conversation and observation to formatively assess students' current knowledge, skills and ability;
- Using technology to provide feedback in a timely manner do and to do baseline assessment;
- Sharing resources and best practices;
- Early identification of students who are not meeting the outcomes;
- Consistently using formative assessment in order to guide instruction;
- Teaching skills in order to appropriately answer level 4 questions;
- Using exemplars as a tool to help students meet learning targets; and
- The creation of common rubrics with common language that focus on effort and academic achievement.

How have your school's professional learning communities contributed to your response?

Our Math professional learning community (PLC) worked to align curriculum mapping, create common assessments and common Conversation/Observation rubric. Teachers also developed a comprehensive problem solving program, including lessons, activities, weekly puzzlers and common assessments.

Our literacy PLC has contributed to the changes that have occurred in our instructional and assessment practices:

- We identified our learning targets and created "student-friendly" language such as anchor questions and rubrics.
- We did curriculum mapping of critical literacy skills across grades 7, 8, and 9, which later became part of the literacy "mega-plan". This plan was then shared with all teaching staff, used as a sample for all subject area teachers to be able to create their own.
- The presentation of the "mega-plan" was a springboard for a school-wide development and implementation of a cross-curricular "level 4" question bank.
- We created a common assessment at all grade levels.
- We revised the common assessment to include a graphic organizer.
- We shared best assessment practice.

We used the results of common assessments, classroom assessment, and classroom observations to guide our practice. In addition, this year we added technology into the mix as a method to engage our learners, keep our practice relevant, and enhance our ability provide feedback in a timelier manner.

Critical thinking is now at the forefront of our everyday practice across grade level and subject matter. Over the three years of the cohort being assessed, the achievement gap has narrowed significantly.