

Ellenvale 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	90%	91%
Writing - Organization	83%	80%
Writing - Language Use	81%	82%
Writing - Conventions	75%	70%
<u>Math Assessments</u>		
Grade 8 Provincial		
Mathematics	62%	63%

Ellenvale Junior High School has completed Year Five of the continuous school improvement (CSI) process in 2015-16. Our team has used several data sources including HRSB survey data, our Grade 8 Provincial assessment results (table above) and our classroom-based assessments through the process of assessing improvement. All have indicated that our school is an improving school. Our two goals: one in math and one in literacy were shown to significantly improve instruction and learning at Ellenvale Junior High. The Continuous school improvement process will continue this year as we revisit our Math and Literacy school-wide goals through our SSP – Student Success Planning Process in every classroom. Teachers are meeting in their PLC groups (professional learning communities) to determine the emphasis for the goal development, strategies for instruction to work with the goals and ways to assess student growth in the identified areas for improvement.

This past school year 2015-16, we continued to expand on the original revised literacy goal from 2013-14: that students will ***improve their non-fiction reading comprehension with a focus on in-depth questioning and critical thinking***. Based on this goal, all English and French language arts teachers were engaged in professional development related to student conferencing and accurate data collection. The student conferencing model is based on three central questions:

1. What do we want our students to know?
2. How will we teach them what they need to know?
3. What will we do if they 'aren't getting it'?

A typical student/teacher conference involves the following steps:

- A student selects a piece of non-fiction
- The student reads with the teacher
- The teacher questions the student about their understanding/comprehension of the text
- Finally the teacher evaluates the proficiency of the students' ability to comprehend, question, and think critically.

Based on this technique, Ellenvale language teachers have been able to better assess, evaluate, and intervene when students demonstrate learning challenges.

The changes to literacy instruction at Ellenvale have been significant during the current continuous school

improvement process. Teachers are conferencing on a weekly basis with students and intervening when learning challenges are diagnosed, rather than remediating after the fact. The conferencing model allows teachers to assess students while the learning is being demonstrated, and often throughout each term.

Ellenvale teachers are working diligently on creating a common instructional framework to represent best current pedagogical practice. Ellenvale teachers are using clear learning goals, success criteria, and descriptive feedback to enhance their lessons. Our students enter their classes expecting the teacher to clearly communicate the day's learning targets and students use these targets to assess where they are in the learning process.

Ellenvale's professional learning communities (PLCs) have employed three tactics to better instruct and assess our student. First, we acknowledged that the 'best practice' model of student/teacher conferencing provides teachers with the best sense of students' reading comprehension proficiency. Our professional learning groups discussed, in consultation with school board literacy coaches, how to best deliver instruction based on evidence collected through the conferencing process.

The second way that our PLC teacher teams responded to the learning needs of students was through the ongoing development of a '**common instructional framework**'. Our principal's participation in the Nova Scotia Instructional Leadership Cohort created the opportunity for our staff to adopt two common instructional practices that reflect current best practice. Each instructional session begins with a clearly stated learning goal, and each topic explored in the classroom should be of a cognitively complex nature. In our PLCs we discussed student friendly learning goals; also, the PLCs were focused on taking traditional language arts concepts and adding a dimension of cognitive complexity. We will continue to implement and expand the repertoire of instructional practices school-wide as described by Robert Marzano, along with the Mike Rutherford instructional coaching model.

The third approach being discussed in our professional learning groups is 'formative assessment'. Rather than evaluating our students at the end of a given topic or unit, Ellenvale's language arts teachers are continuously evaluating students on a daily basis. Daily evaluations provide the opportunity for teachers to intervene instantly to make mid-course corrections when a learner is experiencing difficulties.

In the area of mathematics, three goals have guided our instruction for improvement: First, Math teachers aligned the mental math strategies with their curriculum outcomes at each grade level as a means to activate prior knowledge and to reinforce prior learning. Second, Math teachers used multiple types of assessments – *assessment of learning*, *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* to inform instruction and targeted responses for students who have not yet met learning goals. Teachers will continue to work on developing common mental math strategies in their PLCs to improve students understanding and teacher instruction. The focus of the math team's work this year has been to refine the data collection processes and to gather evidence to consider re-working the current goal.

In June 2015 the Ellenvale CSI team met with data coaches from HRSB to analyze several sources of data including the HRSB Getting to Great surveys of the past four years, the grade 8 provincial reading writing, and math data, and internal student assessment data to monitor progress toward the CSI plan. triangulation of these data sources do provide evidence of progress toward the CSI goals. To that end, our CSI team together with Math and Literacy staff teams will prepare our final report on this progress

As we look forward to our next school year and the implementation of the next phase of school improvement, or Student Success Planning, we have become more aware of the need to augment culturally responsive teaching which is founded on the Principles of Learning and the use of in-depth knowledge of individual students' strengths, talents and abilities to plan for instruction that is relevant to students' lives and learning styles. We will be strategizing ways to increase cross-curricular connections, ways to increase hands-on and interactive approaches to instruction, ways to increase social collaboration, ways to increase inclusivity and ways to increase active participation. There are several answers to student survey results from our Getting to Great survey process over the past few years that would support the need to address these areas.

To this end, all permanent staff have received two full days of professional development on the topic of

Culturally Relevant and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. We will follow up with a third day in 2015-16.