

**Gaetz Brook Junior High School**  
**2015-16 Community Report**

<b>Provincial Assessments</b>		
	<b>School (%)</b> 2015-16	<b>Board (%)</b> 2015-16
<b><u>Literacy Assessments</u></b>		
<b>Grade 8 Provincial</b>		
Reading	73%	76%
Writing - Ideas	89%	91%
Writing - Organization	82%	80%
Writing - Language Use	84%	82%
Writing - Conventions	71%	70%
<b><u>Math Assessments</u></b>		
<b>Grade 8 Provincial</b>		
Mathematics	66%	63%

Gaetz Brook Junior High has completed year three of our Student Success Plan (SSP), formerly referred to as a Continuous School Improvement plan. The goals of our plan are as follows:

**Literacy: Our students will demonstrate improvement in the areas of ideas and communication of ideas in their writing.**

**Math: Students will demonstrate improvement in the application of number sense and operations.**

Teachers, like our students, are learners. In the 2015-16 academic year, teachers focused their learning in the following areas:

- The English Language Arts (ELA) lead team provided multiple PD sessions for staff throughout the year centered on how to support the literacy goal for our school. Time was spent creating and understanding a common language to be used across the curriculum so all students and staff received the same message and knew what would be done to support the goal. Staff also came together to explore the various writing structures used in content areas so exemplars could be created in support of the latter. Finally, our team worked with staff to plan ways to move our students beyond the simplicity of matters of correctness and sentence structure to the proper formation of paragraphs and essay writing.
- Staff worked with Brain Based learning and looked at effective ways to integrate teaching strategies like the Six Learning Principles that Trump Traditional Teaching in an effort to reach more learners and peak interest in learning in our classrooms.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAiXOgFu8Wc>
- In order to promote more collaboration and to incite interest in the act of writing and creating, staff participated in several Google Apps for Education (GAfE) sessions which provided effective ways to use and integrate these apps into daily lesson plans.
- Staff partook in several sessions centered on formative assessment with the goal of creating more student centered classrooms where learners could easily identify the concept or skill they were meant to be working with and be able to identify where they were in the learning.
- Staff participated in PD centered on culturally proficient teaching practices, not only to better plan for every individual in front of them in the classroom but to ensure they are doing everything possible to make students feel welcome, safe and part of the GBJH family.

When teachers learn, students learn from improved or changed practices in the classroom. This year teachers implemented the following practices:

- A variety of assessment practices are happening in classrooms:
  - daily learning targets, written in student friendly language, are shared so students know the why behind what they are doing
  - rubrics and checklists to accompany assignments so students can assess where they are in their learning and how well they are doing
  - purposeful pre-planned questioning to guide student discussion and deepen thinking
  - entrance passes to assess prior knowledge and understanding of previously taught concepts and skills and exit passes to check for understanding immediately after a lesson to guide planning for the next lesson.
  - authentic common assessment practices re: common understanding of expectations and what levels 1-4 mean in a subject area
- Common language being used by all teachers to provide expectations and support of the schools improvement goals when teaching students.
- Brain based learning (6 trumps) (see link provided previously)
- Use of Google Apps for Education (GAPE) for new ways to respond to curriculum demands

Teachers are asked to work together to improve student achievement. This collaboration included:

- Time to create, share and modify common assessments, analyze local and provincial data and some time for common marking and discussion. Common assessment data in literacy shows evidence of strong improvement over the 2014-15 academic year, however smaller improvements in each grade level over this past year in the area of organization in writing and communication of ideas. It should be noted that teacher expectation and direction in all subjects surrounding these elements has also risen significantly this year.
- Teachers spent time developing and sharing exemplars of good writing based on the needs identified during data analysis. This is a preface to the development of cross curricular writing assignments beginning in the fall with the goal of fostering connections between ELA and other content areas regarding the importance of good writing skills not just in ELA for credit, but in life.
- Math teachers were fortunate to have math coach support twice this year as they looked for ways to improve common planning and assessment practices
- Teachers spent time collecting and analyzing common assessment data and noted an extraordinary difference regarding the application of number sense and operations. The percentage of students achieving at a level 3 or above increased from 16% overall in the 2014-15 year to 54% during this academic year. A very encouraging result.
- As we began this year with a new curriculum for all three grades, much of the collaboration time for math teachers was spent creating a common understanding and determining appropriate success criteria for students.
- Grade 8 Math and ELA teachers designed and executed an in depth preparation plan to ensure students would be better prepared during the experience of provincial assessments. Administration supported this endeavour by serving a light breakfast to all grade 8 students the morning of each assessment, providing resources needed during the assessment and reviewing the purpose and importance of students' best performance with each class before preparation activities began.

We are pleased with another year of greater student achievement at our school and feel confident with our plan for more improvement next year. Our schools provincial assessment achievement results have significantly improved over the last 3 years. In 2013 only 36 % of our Grade 8 students were at expected levels of achievement in Math. In 2016 that number increased to 66% which is currently higher than the HRSB overall score. At present we are scoring higher than the HRSB overall in every literacy assessments except in the area of *Ideas in Writing* which is at a respectable 89% and our overall reading

scores have improved from 60% in 2013 to 73 % for the 2016 assessments. Our teachers have gone to great lengths to collaborate and provide a consistent message to students across the curriculum in regards to writing expectations and I believe it shows in our students' performance.

We are looking forward to collaborating in the design of lessons and activities that can respond to outcomes in multiple courses. This will both reduce student workload and create meaningful connections between different subjects as well as real world applications. We will move forward with the creation of subject specific exemplars of good writing and put plans in motion to bring our students closer to successful essay writing before reaching grade ten. Math teachers have committed to creating success criteria in student friendly language and are planning on common marking to ensure accurate collection of student achievement data. Finally, teachers will develop a more varied and extensive bank of questioning strategies to promote better understanding and a common language when discussing math concepts.