



2015-16 Community Report – JL Isley High School

Provincial Assessments		
	School (%) 2015-16	Board (%) 2015-16
<u>Literacy Assessments</u>		
Grade 10 Provincial		
Reading	71%	78%
Writing - Ideas	73%	69%
Writing - Organization	73%	65%
Writing - Language Use	71%	65%
Writing - Conventions	67%	60%
<u>Math Assessments</u>		
Grade 10 Provincial		
Mathematics	75%	72%
Mathematics At Work	61%	54%

Graduation Rates	
School Year	Rate
2015-16	92%
Destination after High School	
Community College	20%
University	39%
Other Education or Training	8%
Join Workforce	7%
Unknown	13%

This being the final year of our Student Success Plan (formerly Continuous School Improvement) the primary focus was upon the implementation of established improvement strategies in the areas of numeracy and literacy. Our Literacy goal was to increase student proficiency in reading comprehension of information text including electronic sources. The Mathematics goal was to create open-ended math problems that were aligned with the new Math curriculum.

With the introduction and implementation of the new Provincial Mathematics Curriculums in grade 10 (2013), grade 11 (2014) and grade 12 (2015) the Mathematics Department was heavily involved in professional development to support these new High School courses. Over the past three years, our Mathematics teachers attended multiple professional learning opportunities focused upon both instructional, and assessment methodologies to best support the introduction of these new curriculums. A significant amount of time was also devoted to the development and instructional use of open-ended mathematical problems to develop greater skills involving higher-order thinking and problem-solving strategies. The Mathematics Department is working diligently to ensure that a wide variety of instructional methods, structured examples, differentiated lessons and open-ended questions are embedded within the daily lessons and assessments. Students were being asked to use these acquired skills with an increased focus on a variety of question types which were embedded within daily instruction and assessment of our mathematics students.

Some of the literacy instructional strategies for improving reading comprehension applied by all of our classroom teachers, included; developing common vocabulary lists for like courses, word walls, use of exit slips to assess reading levels within courses, key term usage, signage, leveled activities, literature circles, authentic texts of varied reading levels, and modelling reading comprehension strategies such as annotating text. In combination, all of these supported our students with the development of strategies to independently and efficiently solve vocabulary problems.

English teachers have begun to develop “annotation summaries” as a way to quickly gauge how well students have read a non-fiction piece. These summaries ask students to identify and define difficult words and phrases, summarize main ideas, and connect with other reading. Our literacy strategy to improve upon student understanding and achievement through increased emphasis on vocabulary has reminded us of the importance of explicitly teaching the terminology and helping students make connections within subject areas. We have seen improvements in student knowledge and use of terminology across all subject areas. The Science Department focused on vocabulary building as a strategy for improving reading comprehension of non-fiction texts to help improve student success and development of their understandings within their respective courses. The focus has informed their practice and encouraged Science teachers to apply cross curricular applications to help increase student proficiency in reading comprehension of information text.

Our school continues to network, strengthen and establish new relationships to build upon and develop systems for student support to help improve upon their overall performance and success. This includes our on-going community partnership with Chebucto Connections who adopted *Pathways to Education*. This is a national, community-based program, which continues to support our youth’s education in attaining high school completion and graduation. Additionally, SchoolPlus, a collaborative interagency approach to supporting children, youth and their families is also providing services to our school community.

All Departments have been working collaboratively within their respective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support and implement the literacy strategies within their own subject areas to help improve reading comprehension. Focused discussions within the Math PLCs around an increased use of open-ended problem solving had a direct impact upon the development of good mathematical ‘habits of mind’ among our students. Overall, the Student Success Planning (SSP) process has resulted in the creation of an expanded literacy tools database, and hence enhanced our capacity as a staff to best tackle the challenges for students both in the areas of mathematics and literacy.

In essence, the work completed throughout our SSP journey in seeking an informed understanding and best addressing the challenges that arise in the teaching of literacy and mathematics at JL Ilesley High School certainly did define and guide the attainment of our student improvement goals. This whole exercise has also strengthened our beliefs as to why literacies are so important and integral for this generation of students.

PART 2

Over the past four years there has been a strategic focus both upon literacy and mathematics to increase our students' proficiencies in reading comprehension of information text (including electronic sources) and further developing their mathematical reasoning skills on solving open-ended questions. The 2015-16 Grade 10 Provincial English and Mathematics results certainly suggests that our students overall are achieving at higher average rates compared to those of the entire Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB). All Departments have applied evidence-based literacy improvement strategies that were focused upon the vocabulary being taught within their respective subject areas, utilized leveled classroom instructional techniques and selected appropriate reading materials, created a student website research evaluation tool and presented varied annotation strategies to further assist students with the comprehension of non-fiction texts.

In the English Department, our specific focus was on the annotation of texts. After four years of applying these strategies, we have noticed a marked improvement in our students' comprehension of non-fiction texts. This observation is supported by the results on our Grade 12 exams, which included an annotation procedure. Our students have improved significantly on this segment of the exam, going from an average grade of 68% in 2013 to an average mark of 84% in 2016. We are very pleased with these results, and with the improvement that they signify.

The cohesive and collective dedication exhibited by the entire Ilesley Staff as per our Student Success Planning goals has had a direct effect upon the improvement of our students in literacy and mathematics. Our Provincial Grade 10 Mathematics scores are above the HRSB average due to all the hard work being done by our Math Department which literally begins with visitations to all of the JL Ilesley feeder schools, working closely with their school administration, and hosting Grade 9 parent/guardian meetings to ensure that all students are choosing the appropriate pathway in mathematics.

We are encouraged by the small changes in the Grade 10 Provincial Assessment literacy and mathematics data results however we continue to pause, reflect and reconfigure our efforts to continue improving upon student achievement. Some of our challenges and opportunities in seeking and attaining further improvements will invariably be focused upon further assisting our students establish their own personal educational pathway for success and motivation to do so. Our graduation rate continues to be fairly strong however approximately 13% of our graduates had not clearly established a clear career destination path following a successful high school completion. However, we are certainly encouraged by our annual HRSB Getting To Great Student Survey results as over 80% of the student respondents continue to feel that our teachers usually/always expect them to do nothing but their best in school. Our challenge in moving forward with our student success planning efforts for improving achievement will be identifying the supports, interventions, and strategies that are a best fit for attaining our improvement goals and students determining their destination after high school.