

MONTHLY UPDATE

From the AVRCE Regional Executive Director of Education



Annapolis Valley
Regional Centre for Education



LITERACY LEARNING IN ACTION

Improving students' overall achievement in literacy is one of the goals of our System Improvement Plan. All schools and classrooms, like Mrs. Fuller's classroom at Port Williams Elementary School, are using foundational practices that are proven to help students learn and achieve.

To support literacy learning, these practices include creating an environment that is conducive to inquiry, maintaining diverse classroom libraries, and using visual supports. Teachers are making learning visible through modelling and demonstration, and are designing opportunities for students to talk, read, and write independently, with a partner, and in small groups.

Visit www.avrce.ca/system-improvement-plan for the complete System Improvement Plan.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Building connections: the importance of connections to student success and well-being
- Call for applications: Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence
- School wigwams connecting students to Mi'kmaw culture, history
- Identity, belonging and connections: NSA, SSW programs, diverse course offerings
- Self-identification matters!
- WE Day: Celebrating youth change-makers
- Remembrance Day: Reflecting on peace, honouring sacrifices
- Student Vote: Learning about elections firsthand
- Developing digital citizenship and critical literacy skills
- Winter is coming...information on school cancellations due to weather/road conditions

COMING UP

- November 18-21: High school mid-term report cards sent home
- November 18 - December 5: Elementary report cards sent home, parent-teacher conferences
- November 19: Common early dismissal
- November 20: Transgender Day of Remembrance
- November 25-28: High school mid-term parent-teacher conferences

BUILDING CONNECTIONS



November is shaping up to be a great month for connections. Schools have connected with community members, veterans and Canadian Forces members to honour Remembrance Day. Later this month, parents and guardians will have the opportunity to connect with teachers during parent-teacher conferences. Representatives from School Advisory Councils (SAC) in AVRCE and two other regions met in October to connect with each other about the important work they do; this has provided new energy for individual SACs to build and maintain strong connections between parents/guardians, school staff and our school communities.

We know that student connections with teachers have a significant impact on student well-being and success. Teachers connecting and collaborating with each other is also vital as we implement evidence-based foundational practices. These foundational practices are outlined in our System Improvement Plan, and are shown to have a positive effect on student achievement.

For example, high school math teachers are working together to create common assessments. Common and cumulative assessments are important tools to improve instruction and student achievement; they ensure that students in the same course at different schools are learning and being assessed on the same topics at the same level of difficulty. Cumulative assessments—tests that include all topics covered during the course—also help students retain and improve their knowledge, while the results help teachers track student progress and identify areas where more support is needed.

Peer coaching is another example of teachers connecting with each other to create a positive culture of learning and strong practices in planning, instruction and assessment. Peer coaches met recently for orientation, and these instructional leaders are now providing short-term support to teachers who want to strengthen their skills. When teachers work together and share their expertise in this way, everyone benefits—especially students.

Sincerely,

Dave Jones
Regional Executive Director of Education

 @DaveJones_AVRCE · #WorkingTogetherforStudents · #AVRCEProud



Grade 9 math teachers working on common assessments.



Peer Coaches at a recent orientation session.



Award Encourages Young Innovators

Students in grades 6-12 have an opportunity to bring their business ideas to life. Applications are open for the Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence, which provides three students with mentorship and \$1,000 each to launch their ideas. Deadline to apply is February 20, 2020. Details at novascotia.ca/entrepreneuraward/.



SCHOOL WIGWAMS

Connecting students to Mi'kmaq culture and history.

Students at Cambridge and District Elementary School were eager to watch and listen to Elder John Henry Lafford as a traditional wikuom/wigwam took shape before their eyes. Regional Executive Director Dave Jones took the photo to the left when he joined CDES students and staff for this cultural experience.

Mr. Lafford travelled from Eskasoni to share his knowledge and skills, so students at CDES and neighbouring Central Kings Rural High School will have a permanent wigwam on site.

Cambridge principal Renee Levy says watching the wigwam come together was an excellent learning experience. Once completed, it will be a learning space for everyone.

“As students watched the building process, Mr. Lafford explained the knowledge needed to choose the right wood, and how the wigwam is shaped. It was a great opportunity to learn the history and the building process. This will be a space for learning for all students, as well as an opportunity for our school's Native Student Advisor, Katelyn Melanson, to share the Mi'kmaq culture and way of life.”

A wigwam is also being constructed at L.E. Shaw Elementary.



Self-Identification Matters

When schools send home registration forms to update your contact information, you may have noticed a voluntary section that asks you to self-identify your child's ancestry. We encourage everyone to self-identify because this information helps us to know the communities we serve, to deliver culturally-responsive programming, and to address historically-rooted achievement gaps. This year 69 per cent of students self-identified, up 12 per cent from 2018-2019.

IDENTITY, BELONGING & CONNECTIONS

One of our System Improvement Plan goals is to help all students to grow in their sense of identity, belonging and personal empowerment in a relational, supportive and student-centred environment. On the ground, this means promoting and valuing self-identification, creating a culturally-enriched environment where students recognize themselves in their learning, and valuing and building relationships with families and the wider community. These foundational practices infuse our work on all levels.

Offering diverse course choices is part of creating a culturally-enriched school environments. This year, the following number of schools are offering:

Citizenship 9 - 9 schools • *African Canadian Studies 11* - 7 schools
English 12 African Heritage - 2 schools • *Mi'kmaq Studies 11* - 11 schools
Gaelic Studies 11 - 1 school

For students who self-identify as being of African decent and/or Indigenous ancestry, the Native Student Advisor (NSA) and Student Support Worker (SSW) programs are available to support them in achieving their goals, provide cultural learning opportunities, and contribute to a positive school experience. NSAs and SSWs work with students, families, communities and school staff, contributing to a culturally-rich and responsive school environment.

Student Support Worker Program : Native Student Advisor Program

- 369 students in program
 - Serving 29 schools
 - 30 graduates in June 2019
- 231 students in program
 - Serving 26 schools
 - 26 graduates in June 2019



SSW Carmelita Johnson's office at BRCS is a welcoming space where students can drop in for support, gather with friends, or take part in regular "lunch bunch" culturally-themed art activities.



Native Student Advisors and students attended the Acadia University Powwow, including a lesson on sweetgrass with Elder Della Maguire. Celebrating culture and traditions is a key part of the NSA program.

WE DAY ATLANTIC: CELEBRATING YOUTH CHANGE-MAKERS



**WE Day
2019**

Hailey Halliday represented AWEC's Social Issues Club at WE Day on October 16.

On October 16, hundreds of AVRCE students were among thousands of youth change-makers gathered in Halifax for WE Day Atlantic. WE Day is a celebration of youth action to create positive change in our communities and around the world. Schools that take part in the WE program engage students, through clubs or classroom projects, in experiential service-learning that develops skills, knowledge and empowerment.

Students earn tickets to WE Day by researching and supporting one local and one global cause. Many WE groups in AVRCE support local food banks and animal shelters, as well as water, health care, or school construction projects abroad.

Annapolis West Education Centre's Social Issues Club was featured during WE Day for their work over the past seven years. Grade 12 student Hailey Halliday was interviewed and asked to come on stage to discuss the club's Fast for Food fundraising event. Hailey not only received a gift certificate for her involvement with the club, but a \$2,500 donation was made to the local food bank, in recognition of the club's local cause. Congratulations to the AWEC Social Issues Club, and to all students who are making a difference through WE initiatives!

REMEMBRANCE DAY:

REFLECTING ON PEACE, HONOURING SACRIFICES



Student dance performance during the West Kings District High School Remembrance Day ceremony.



Three Mile Plains District School students wore red for their Remembrance Day assembly



Kings County Academy grade 1-2 students learn about the poppy through art.



West Hants Middle School students express thanks through classroom door artwork

Leading up to November 11, classrooms across the region included Remembrance Day in daily lessons, encouraging to students to reflect on peace and the sacrifices made during times of conflict.

Schools welcomed community members, veterans and Canadian Forces members to Remembrance Day assemblies, honouring those who have served to uphold peace and freedom.

STUDENT VOTE: LEARNING ABOUT ELECTIONS FIRSTHAND

Twenty-eight AVRCE schools were among 8,000 schools from across Canada to take part in Student Vote during the federal election period in October.

Student Vote is a national program that gives students the opportunity to experience the voting process firsthand and to learn about active citizenship, government and the electoral process.

Students are encouraged to research local candidates, issues and party platforms. Then, students take on the role of election workers and coordinate a vote within their school or classroom. They cast mock ballots for the candidates running in the school's electoral riding. Along the way, students are learning critical literacy and research skills, and gaining insights in to how democracy works in Canada.

To see how Nova Scotian students voted, visit https://studentvote.ca/results/provincial_results/33/6.



Central Kings Rural High School



Hantsport School



West Kings District High School



St. Mary's Elementary School

Developing Digital Citizenship & Critical Literacy Skills

With a world of information available to students at any time, developing digital citizenship and critical literacy skills is a priority across all grades. These skills equip students with the ability to understand messages found in online articles and other sources of media such as news broadcasts, blogs, or books through careful analysis of text and how it is presented.

Digital Citizenship Skills

- Learning how to navigate and interact safely online
- Respecting privacy (your own and others)
- Communicating with respect
- Seeing things from another perspective
- Understanding and following norms of appropriate, responsible, and empowered technology use

Critical Literacy Skills

- Thinking about the source of information, and the author's purpose or intent
- Considering whether information is fair, accurate and reliable
- Noticing whose voices are absent
- Interpreting information using your own experience, knowledge and point of view
- Recognizing your own power as the reader

What can you do to encourage these skills?

- Talk with kids about what they are doing and who they are interacting with online
- Set expectations for respect and kindness
- Offer access to age-appropriate information in a variety of formats; in print, electronic, visual, audio, etc.
- Let your child know they can ask questions or talk with you about things they see or read.
- When talking about something they have read or viewed, ask what they think about the point of view expressed, or what kind of messages they recognize.
- Have conversations about things that interest your child, like a hot topic in popular culture, or an event in the news.
- Encourage your child to share their ideas and opinions with you. Dig deeper and ask what helped shape their views.

Questions or Concerns?

If you have a question or concern about something at your child's school, we want to work with you to resolve it. Please start by speaking with your child's teacher. Then, follow up with the principal if needed. If more action is required, contact AVRCE at 902.538.4617. For more information, visit www.avrce.ca/parentguardian-concerns.

Winter is Coming...

Winter is coming...time to make your back-up plan in case of school cancellations due to weather or road conditions.

Student safety is our first priority. Decisions around cancellations are based on many sources of information on roads, weather and real-time conditions. For more details, visit www.avrce.ca/storm-daysschool-cancellations

How do I find out if school is cancelled?

Parents/Guardians: We will text/email you using PowerSchool and the contact information you provided to your school in September. Let your school know if your email or phone number changes.

School Community Members: You can sign up for Notify Me texts/emails on the AVRCE website. If you signed up before, your information is still on file (message delivery timing will depend on your cellphone provider).

We also share announcements on:

- www.avrce.ca
- @AVRCE_NS on Twitter
- AVRCE phone line, 902.538.4600 or 1.800.850.3887
- Local media (AVR/Magic 94.9, 89.3 K-Rock, CBC Radio 1, CTV Morning Live Atlantic)

Get in touch with AVRCE

121 Orchard Street. Berwick, NS B0P 1E0
902.538.4600/1.800.850.3887
www.avrce.ca
@AVRCE_NS 
Media Contact: 902.538.4614