

Superintendent's Report for DEC

December 8, 2021

ENDS #1: Provide a safe, healthy, and welcoming educational environment for learners, staff, families, and partners

Since our November 10 meeting it has been a challenging few weeks with Covid outbreaks at several schools with most being in the SJ Education Centre. The week of November 15 at Millidgeville North, Grand Bay Primary, Inglewood, St. Stephen High School, River Valley Middle, Seaside Park (two outbreaks), Island View Elementary, Belleisle Elementary and Forest Hills. The week of November 22 at Beaconsfield Middle, Seaside Park, Centennial and Forest Hills (two outbreaks). The week of November 29 – Centennial, Westfield Elementary (two outbreaks) and Hammond River Valley. Many of these outbreaks have involved buses which means a more thorough process to identify the close contacts.

We have had questions why some schools have an “operational/learn from home day” and others do not. Public Health typically receive their PCR test results around suppertime and into the evening. They work through these results and if a school/bus is directly related, I will receive an email or a phone call and this can vary from suppertime to 9:00 p.m. at the latest. It often depends on how many positive test results are in our Health Region. On the evening of November 30 when the communication came after 8 p.m., it was two schools, and both involved buses. The decision I made was that we required an “operational/learn from home day”, as the nurses were finishing their shift and we needed time to identify the close contacts of the positive case, and we require the Public Health letter that the Principal shares with the families of the close contact/student/staff. If it is a unique situation there needs to be direct involvement by Dr. Barker, our Regional Medical Officer of Health and she may determine that learning from home should be for more than one day, and we act on her recommendation. I work with a wonderful team of nurses from Public Health, and as always, we are pleased to have Nurse Ann Hogan who helps us sort through some of the complications! We acknowledge the work of transportation assistant managers in providing the names of students who are assigned to an impacted bus, and to facilities for assisting in delivering the rapid/POC tests and arranging for a disinfecting spray to the classroom. When we have notification of a case, it is very time sensitive as we work through the process and a big

thank you to our Principals and to Jessica Hanlon, Nick Munn, and Marc Godin who work closely with me on the process, regardless of the hour or day of the week.

This Saturday, a pharmacy in east SJ will be offering an immunization clinic for Loch Lomond Elementary, the same pharmacy plans to offer evening/Saturday clinics at Kennebecasis Park Elementary, Forest Hills/Glen Falls, Champlain Heights, Bayview, Sussex Corner and Lakewood Heights in the coming weeks. A pharmacy in St, Stephen will also be offering a student clinic. Public Health will offer a west SJ clinic at Seaside Park this Saturday for west side students. We will continue to work with pharmacies and with our partners at Public Health to offer the clinics and advertise to parents.

There are many questions now about December activities and what is possible for annual holiday traditions at schools such as an in-person concert as well as turkey dinners and extra-curricular student council and graduation class activities.

ENDS #2: Improve student engagement and achievement by embedding research based best practices in a variety of learning environments.

On December 3, 2021 (K-8 parent teacher and high school PD) nine high schools will be attending an assessment focused professional learning session led by Sandra Herbst. Sandra is a well-known writer, presenter, and former Superintendent in Manitoba. The session will focus on backwards design and balanced assessment, paying specific attention to best practices with final exams. Many of our high schools have an assessment focus in their School Improvement Plan and many advancements were made last year with non-traditional and authentic assessments. Student assessment has been a District focus in our DIP for a few years, and is a challenging area in which to make change.

With the impending rollout of the new grade 3-10 science curriculum in 2022-23, middle school science teachers have an opportunity to participate in a PL Seminar Series focused on climate education and the new science curriculum. Five one-hour sessions will be led by the ASD-S Science Team, Science East, Pocket Lab, Water Rangers, and The Gaia Project. Teachers will be provided with hands on activities and resource kits to support implementation of the new curriculum.

This fall, teachers had the opportunity to apply for Innovation Grants and a total of \$64K was awarded to support 45 projects (18 projects at 12 elementary schools, 10 projects at 9 middle schools, and 16 across 9 high schools). The grants ranged from \$225 to \$2500. A list of the projects has been included with the meeting materials. Teachers are asked to capture their project in pictures/video, there will be an opportunity to report on the project and if we have an Innovation Showcase in Spring 2022, they can participate.

ENDS #3: Engage system's leaders in improving mental health and resiliency for both learners and staff through proactive strategies such as Positive Education and Social Emotional learning.

School counsellors do two days of professional learning each year specifically on counselling, which is equivalent to the continuing education requirements of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Associations. School counsellors are not required to be members of CCPA, but we do look to it as the national organization for best practices. One session was held on November 30 for middle/high school, with the morning focused on anti-racism and equity, and the afternoon was a refresher on the questions and responses counsellors use when exploring suicide ideation and creating safety plans for students. Although all counsellors have taken the Applied Suicide Intervention and Skills Training (ASIST), the review of the main points is important to keep their skills sharp in this important element of their work. This was led by Jen Grant, School Counselling Coordinator and ASIST trainer, with help from retired coordinator and ASIST trainer Pam Miller. K-5 Counsellors will meet in January.

Sessions are being held for our beginning teachers (November 25, December 1, and December 7), focused on training in anti-racism and equity from Therese Trofinmencoff, Anti-Racism & Equity Coach, on teaching social/emotional learning (SEL) across the curriculum from Christine Morgan-Aherne, SEL & Positive Education Coach, and on developing strong relationships with students from Heather Whittaker, Rob Mather, and Jessica Bellis, School Counselling Coaches.

Another Mental Health First Aid training is planned for next week. We ensure all administrators, school counsellors, guidance teachers, and behaviour intervention mentors have this training.

We are now also training staff in other roles who have high levels of interactions with students, such as staff who advise student councils, direct plays, and coach sports.

The Mental Health Youth Forum took place on Thursday December 2 in person, with all high schools represented by guidance and a team of three students. Students were selected by their counsellors based on those who are in leadership positions, and interest in advocating for social emotional wellness. Students were introduced to the “wheel of well-being,” and information from a member of the Child and Youth Team on emotions, anxiety and how to recognize and cope was shared by a member of the Child & Youth Team when you are feeling overwhelmed.

School and District leaders will have a one-hour TEAMS session with Kevin Cameron from the North American Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response. We met virtually with Kevin in late August – his leadership advice to those leading schools and the District through the pandemic is valued. He has a national perspective on the situation. Last year, Kevin recommended the Management Team get support from some Subject Coordinators to visit each Principal/VP team to do a check-in visit and a walk through of the school to determine what is going well, what they are proud of, what are the stressors, what can be done to mitigate those stressors, student and staff morale, student behavior etc. We work in pairs and each pair has 7-9 schools to visit. The plan is to complete these visits by the holidays.

ENDS #4: Ensure all members of the school and district community are welcomed, respected, accepted, and supported.

Therese Trofimencoff, Anti-Racism and Equity Coach has been very busy with weekly anti-racism & equity education for all staff through her Southern Exposure articles, a presentation to Princess Elizabeth and Quispamsis Elementary School staff, collaborating with PRUDE (Pride of Race, Unity, and Dignity Through Education) to work with eight schools, updated anti-racism resources to the ESS Professional Learning site, collaborating with Curriculum staff on an anti-racism book study, supported an elementary school that was responding to an incident of racist language by students, met with Dr. Manju Varma, provincial anti-racism commissioner, to establish ties with ASD-S, did a video interview with “Java the Puppet” at Fairvale Elementary School for Respect & Diversity Week.

Christine Roy, Principal of SJ the Baptist was the recipient of a diversity award from PRUDE.

OTHER

Coordinator for Guidance/Positive Learning Environment/ISD, Jennifer Grant has been seconded to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development from December until June to be a Learning Specialist for Guidance. This is a wonderful learning opportunity for Jennifer, however her expertise and hard work will be missed! She will be replaced in the interim by Guidance Coach Teacher Heather Whittaker.

Fine Arts Coach Andrea Lewis and Fine Arts Coordinator Kyle Peters again organized the annual invitation for schools to submit designs for the District holiday card. This year elementary schools submitted designs and the SJ Office staff voted on the top designs at our annual Christmas Breakfast on December 1, 2021. We also collected a large bin of toiletries and personal care products to be shared with schools.

We have 42 Early Career Teachers signed up for Dec.8th and 9th for after school virtual PD. Unfortunately, the session had to be condensed due to the limited availability of supply teachers. Participants received PDCA documents and will be encouraged to form goals around Plan-Do-Check-Act. Topics include information about the district and its priorities, how to access Coach support, and communication with families. Other aspects of the Early Career teacher program include being paired with a teacher mentor for a check in every couple of weeks, with reflective questions to guide the conversation. The program participants will receive a 'welcome pack' from ASD-S, which will include 'Surviving and Thriving: Making classroom management and organization work for you and your students', Todd Whittaker's 'What Great Teachers Do Differently' as well as some ASD-S giveaways and a package of whiteboard markers. Program participants will receive a release day for observations and will also be able to choose an additional pedagogical resource.

A letter has been sent to all K-12 families and posted to the website about our winter weather procedures of closure by Centre, community and District, bus delays, and how we communicate with families if there is extreme weather. The Manager and I lead on this process – we also monitor inclement weather through the day and limit travel in the evenings for teams or extra-curricular activities to the local community, the Education Centre or cancel all travel.

