

Superintendent's Report for DEC January 12, 2022

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

Just prior to the holidays the Winter Plan (Levels 1-3) was released by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Virtual meetings were held with Principals and Vice Principals to discuss in detail. Shortly after that meeting NB moved to Level 2 of the Winter Plan. Classes ended for K-6 students on December 17, 2021, on Tuesday, December 21, 2021 for grades 7-8 and noon December 23, 2021 for high schools. Staff at K-8 had an opportunity to review the winter plan and make adjustments to their own school plans.

We saw an increase in cases through December, especially in the Saint John and Hampton Education Centres. The protocol changed so when one case at a K-8 school was announced, all staff and students were considered close contacts at school and on the bus and were required to use a rapid Point of CARE (POC) test for the time period identified by Public Health. At high school we continued to identify which students and staff were close contacts and rapid kits were provided to those unvaccinated. The district distributed approximately 60 000 boxes of test kits. Prior to the holidays each K-6 child was given two tester kits and all grades 7-12 students and staff were given one tester kit for the holidays.

Over the holiday period a team at the Department received the positive case information from Public Health and sent a message on School Messenger to the school families announcing a positive case at the school and recommended the use of a rapid POC test.

On December 30, 2021 the province announced that students would be learning from home starting Tuesday, January 11, 2022 until Friday, January 21, 2022 and the situation would be monitored the week of January 17 to determine next steps. At the same press conference the province announced changes to the isolation period, and use of the PCR test and the rapid Point of Care test.

January 3-5 there were many virtual meetings with the four Anglophone Superintendents and the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister to work out the details of the two weeks. On

Wednesday afternoon, January 5, 2022, two meetings were held for K-8 and for grades 9-12 administrators about the plan. There continues to be countless questions, and we work through those. On Friday, January 7, 2022 teachers returning to school to being planning. The P.D. day to focus on School Improvement Planning will be rescheduled.

There is a document of expectations for each level – K-2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8 and high school was developed by Superintendents in cooperation with the Department and shared with school leaders in our meetings. K-5 will remain primarily paper-based, however, many teachers will invite students who are able to join them on line for two or three short periods of time daily. As before, the priority is relationships with students and making that connection. We acknowledge that at K-6 students cannot be left on their own and many families are scrambling for childcare. We have staff in our offices and in schools in the same situation, so flexibility is important. The expectations for middle schools will be more consistent province-wide with students being offered on-line learning by period. The typical 40-minute middle school period may be condensed to allow time in the mid-afternoon for intervention groups, physical activity, independent reading, and mindfulness activities to name a few. We are mindful of not requiring students to spend too much time on the screen and it is important that the day consist of direct teaching, group work, independent practice, and breaks.

Coordinator Darren White and his four technology coaches are available to support teachers. Middle schools will also be once again loaning technology to families and using what they have. There will be an opportunity for students/families to pick up materials from the lockers and learning packages starting on Monday, January 10, 2022. Attendance will be taken at middle and high schools.

There will be no formal exams the last week of January – there will be an opportunity for classroom tests and other assessments and an opportunity to catch up with work that has been missed. The alternate form of assessment aligns with the work we have been doing with high schools on assessment and would be similar to steps we have taken at other times through the pandemic.

School staff will be working from the school – if a teacher can do their role from home and have young school-aged children, there is flexibility with the Principals and the Directors to permit this to happen. We will have some students in-person at school – all students on an Individualized Personalized Learning Plan (380 in ASD-S) will be invited to attend school and then school

Education Support Services Teams (ESS Teams) are to identify other students who are at-risk/vulnerable and have significant learning needs/language needs to be in school. Parents will be asked if they can transport their child, and if this is not possible, we will organize bussing. This is significant to work through over a short period of time, so thanks to our schools, our ESS teams and the transportation department.

A letter was sent from the district to families on Friday about the next two weeks. This is a very busy time for Early Childhood facilities as well. ASD-S elementary schools house many such facilities, and some are opening to become full-day facilities for families. Late last week we were contacted by the Department about inviting casual/supply EAs to volunteer to work at an Emergency Early Childhood Centre in Saint John at Hazen White St. Francis. This facility will be set up to accommodate health care workers from other part of the province who may be coming to help at the Saint John Regional Hospital.

For now, we have paused our EYE-DA by two weeks (Early Years Direct Assessment) for next year's kindergarten children – this individual assessment is conducted by F.A.C.E (Family and Childhood Education). The assessments began mid-fall and given that our schools have not lost multiple days/weeks because of the pandemic we are on track to have the assessments completed so students in need can benefit from programs being offered to the pre-school population. Approximately two-thirds are finished – 822 assessments.

Rentals will continue for youth group programs over the age of 12 years.

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

An “Outdoor Learning” cohort has been formed consisting of 25 teachers from all subject areas and multiple schools. It is a group of passionate educators who will meet every six weeks to share ideas and try new pedagogical activities that encourage learning outdoors. There are themes connected to the work that are being co-constructed with the participants. Currently the plan is to explore Indigenous activities in January and examine tracks/discuss hibernation in February. Shelters are currently the focused topic for April. Our Health and Physical Education Subject Coordinator, Kari Parsons is on a deferred salary leave this term and will be replaced by

her Physical Education Coach teacher Michelle Brenton. Michelle is a former elementary physical education teacher in Hampton.

Eighteen middle school physical education teachers from across all three Education Centres participated in peer observations at the end of November/December. Full-time physical education specialists were divided into small clusters – four schools hosted, and their specialist teacher taught their regular class while other teachers observed and then participated in a follow-up discussion. The focus of this session was on teaching curriculum outcomes and communicating those with students through the what, why and how approach as well how we can best improve student engagement. The sessions were well received by teachers. We have one cluster of teachers in the HEC who still must complete observations but after that all full-time middle school physical education teachers in the district will have had the opportunity to participate.

All High School SPRs (Special Positions of Responsibility) in ASD-S will have an opportunity to participate in online professional learning beginning at the end of January. The professional learning will focus on using technology to engage students both virtually and during in person instruction and the second component will focus on instructional leadership. Specifically building SPR capacity in instructional coaching so that they can assist their teachers with goal setting and provide them with meaningful feedback connected to their professional goals.

There are several “Plan, Do, Check, Act” projects ongoing in the district. At K-5 the Rural Schools PDCA Project has St. Martin’s, Hammond River Valley, Fundy Shores, and Back Bay schools focusing on self-assessing their ability to embed “Plan, Do, Check, Act” into instruction and assessment, embedding differentiated targeted instruction into practice with the support of literacy and numeracy coaches, and administering numeracy, phonological awareness, and phonics screeners monthly to monitor student progress. The outcome measures for the project will be for K-5 students to exhibit progress throughout the year with 90% or more students reaching grade level standards on each screener by June, and for students to achieve above provincial average on the Grade 4 Literacy and Grade 5 Numeracy Provincial Assessments.

PD continues with Early Childhood facilities, six sessions this fall with six follow-up sessions – total 248 participants. EC Staff also participated in “communities of practice” sessions. Three sessions have happened so far this year with 89 educators.

Professional learning during the hours of instruction has been cancelled for the next two weeks given that we have on-line/learn from home. A huge thank you to the Subject Coordinators and the teacher coaches who supported schools in December by teaching when a supply teacher was not available. This meant at the last minute their schedule for the day had to change. This was coordinated in the early morning by Curriculum Director Ryan Price.

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

Nine teachers, Courtney Mackin of Princess Elizabeth; Mireille Conley of Deer Island; Robert Chapman of Rothesay High; Joy Nickerson and Jen Carhart of Simonds; Madison Logan and Nancy Lyon of Harbour View; Amy Hughson Hume of Compass and Amanda Stebbins of St. Mac's, were awarded an Anti-Bias Anti-Racism Education Grant to study the work of Gholdy Muhammad, author of *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework*. The grant will include professional learning and resources for classroom libraries. (\$500/teacher)

Twelve schools have signed up for the “Welcoming Schools” Initiative. Personalized professional learning is provided to each participating school after an environmental scan to identify school needs. Nine of the twelve schools have received professional learning to date.

A Black Cultures and Histories professional learning series is being offered and to date twenty-nine teachers received a virtual presentation about Black History in New Brunswick from Damon Levine (PRUDE/Black Historical Society). Teachers are currently reading “Blacks in New Brunswick,” by W.A. Spray and will meet again in January.

Twenty-seven K-5 First Nation PLC members spent December 4 learning about Wabanaki technology and archaeology with Austin Paul and spent the afternoon drum making with Greg Mansfield.

Virtual presentations were offered by Wolastoqey Grand Chief Ron Tremblay on ancestral teachings about the Wolastoqey flag and Wolastoqiyik creation story. Three sessions were presented and 63 teachers attended for the teacher professional learning, forty teachers and classes attended the K-5 student session, and sixty-three teachers and their students attended the grades 6-12 student sessions. In total approximately 122 teachers were in attendance and all teacher participants received a Wolastoqey poster flag for their classroom.

OTHER:

Staff from Glen Falls will be returning to their school this week. A huge thank you to Erika Brown and her Vice Principals and staff for making the staff and students so welcome over the last three months. Principal Brown was willing the day after the fire to figure out a solution and I know it involved displacing some individuals from their spaces. Thank you to Principal Colleen Sullivan and her staff from Glen Falls for all they did as well with the packing, and moving, and supporting students in a new location. Great problem solvers!