

## **Superintendent's Report for DEC March 16, 2022**

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

Since reporting at the last DEC meeting on February 9, 2022 schools had a successful three weeks of in-person classes with no schools or classes required to be at home due to a shortage of staff. We did have a small number of bus runs cancelled due to a shortage of bus drivers and some buses running 60 to 90 minutes late so drivers could pick up students if we had driver positions unable to be filled. When in-person classes began on Monday, January 31 at K-8 and Wednesday, February 2, 2022 for high school we hired 75-80 supply teachers for two weeks and they were paired with one or two schools to replace absent teachers if vacancies were not filled through our absence management system. This was extended the three weeks until March Break and will be extended the week after. Our curriculum and some Education Support Services (ESS) teacher coaches and Subject Coordinators were also in schools teaching, or filling roles if a replacement could not be found. We had a higher number of staff in February who needed to be at home isolating with families. Some teachers remained connected from home via technology, however, students had to be supervised in their classrooms. If schools found they did not have enough staff to operationally run their school using the supply teachers, District staff and internal staff, the principal connected with an assigned Director who dispatched more support. We also hired a small group of EA's to work each day until the March Break and we assigned these positions to schools with higher numbers of EA's, where it is challenging to fill vacancies. Feedback from the schools has continued to be positive with our approach and it has for the most part allowed guidance, resource and vice principals to remain in their roles and not have to cover classrooms.

Communication was sent to families on Friday, March 4, 2022, about the lifting of restrictions on Monday, March 14, 2022 when students return to school. Since the announcement on February 24, 2022 there have been many questions and Superintendent provincial meetings to discuss.

Masks will no longer be required for students, staff and visitors at any time in schools and on buses. We know that some will prefer to continue wearing a mask and it is very important that this be respected. There will be many opinions on the lessening of the restrictions. Heather Whittaker, Subject Coordinator overseeing guidance and her team put together speaking points that can be used by teachers when discussing this with their students. Consistent messaging is

important. Everyone has experienced this pandemic differently and it is important that all be treated with respect and kindness.

For now, we will continue providing KN95 masks for those who wish them, hand sanitizer will also be provided, and we will continue to encourage thorough hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette. Students at grades 6-12 will be asked to sanitize their desks between classes. ASD-S will continue to monitor staff and student absences in the coming weeks. Parents are no longer required to notify the school if a student tests positive for Covid-19 and Districts will no longer be posting the schools with cases on the dashboard. We will be doing all we can to make our schools safe for students, and at the same time asking students/staff who are ill with flu and cold-like symptoms to remain at home.

We continue to encourage opportunities to have students outside – at noon and during the school day for classes other than physical education. Our Physical Education Coordinator Kari Parsons, on leave this term, was back for an after-school PD session with teachers on the benefits of learning outside and how to integrate curriculum outcomes.

Extra-curricular activities can occur and as of Monday, February 28 we were not required to collect proof of vaccination for spectators. It is important to keep in mind that many of the year-end events require considerable planning and organization and schools will be assessing what they can do and the comfort level of those involved. High schools are discussing graduation activities, as well as our elementary and middle schools who recognize students who are moving on to another school/level. We want to have our new Kindergarten students visit their schools this spring as the transition to school initiative has had to be adjusted the last two years. Discussions are taking place about the annual Turnaround Achievement Awards and what they will look like.

February was not an easy month for schools, and we hope that everyone has a good March Break week and return feeling excited to complete the school year. Again, I am very proud of our students and staff and everything they have done through the many chapters of the last two years.

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

March 25, 2022 is a professional learning (school-based) half day at K-8 and half day for April report card preparation. We have been able to secure Sandra Herbst, a former Canadian teacher, administrator, and Superintendent and now an author and international presenter on assessment. She will present to K-8 for one hour with some guiding questions to be used with PLC's following

her presentation. Her focus will be on the feedback cycle with a specific emphasis on involving students in the assessment process through peer and self-assessment and the teacher's role in this process. Approximately 20 schools have indicated an interest in participating. We have another opportunity to have Sandra work on a more on-going basis with high schools but at this time need to gauge interest after March Break, in light of other things happening.

Since late November we have been unable to have PD for teachers/school leaders during the school day as we need all available supply teachers to cover staff absences. We know our Principals/VP's/SPR and team PLC leaders are missing the opportunity for much needed PD, and many have an appetite for continued learning. This spring we will be offering a "Leadership Professional Learning Series," with many curriculum, ESS and instructional leadership sessions being offered for 60-90 minutes at the end of the school day. These are all optional and offered by level. The sessions will focus on new curriculum initiatives and areas of focus from our District Improvement Plan such as the Building Blocks of Reading, the new grades 3-10 science curriculum, early childhood education, anti-racism, and social emotional learning. Milltown Elementary School Principal, Heather Bell-Williams will lead four sessions focused on high-performance classroom walk-throughs to foster professional growth. Heather will be retiring at the end of June and has started some part-time work with Solution Tree focused on instructional leadership and promoting teacher growth. Thank you to Ryan Price, Peter Smith, the Coordinators and Coaches who will be facilitating.

After the March Break, schools will be preparing for the administration of provincial assessments, beginning with the English Language Proficiency Assessment at high schools and later spring with grades 4, 6, and 10 as well as the FSL oral interviews and selected high schools participating in PISA. Provincial assessments will be done on-line this year which is a change at grades 4 and 6.

This semester Rothesay High School has the "mobile welding trailer," which moved from Leo Hayes High School in Fredericton last semester. There are 12 welding spaces in the trailer and it includes all equipment needed. This is made possible through EECD, Ocean Steel and Construction Limited, Source Atlantic CWB Welding Foundation. Thank you to RHS teacher Tim Hunter for leading on this initiative.

**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.**

On February 28 Kevin Cameron from the North American Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response did another one-hour virtual session for all school and district leaders. We had over 100 participants in the meeting, extensive notes were taken and circulated to all. Kevin has met with our leaders at least six times through the pandemic and it has been very helpful. He reminded us that covid has had an impact this winter, however the convoys and now the situation in the Ukraine make things more challenging. In his opinion, our focus going forward must be on providing a safe and caring environment for students. Kevin spoke of the challenges this pandemic has placed on families, colleagues and friends and advised “not to ruin long term relationships over short term conflicts.” We need to remember that many students and adults may be afraid and it is important that we “make our world small again.” It is important to recognize that the last two years have impacted people very differently.

Congratulations to Forest Hills School who will be hosting Dr. Tom Hoerr, Scholar in Residence at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. His newest book is “The Principal as Chief Empathy Officer: Creating A Culture Where Everyone Grows.” He will share information from an earlier book, “The Formative Five – Fostering Grit, Empathy and Other Success Skills Every Student Needs.” Dr. Hoerr will offer a provincial session at NBTA, Fredericton on Saturday, March 26.

The week prior to March Break we hosted a K-5 and grades 6-8 virtual “Think Tank,” for Principals and Vice Principals to discuss next school year. It is important for the Directors and I to hear the thoughts of our leaders on what the needs are and what must be priority as we move from the pandemic. We recognize that learning has been interrupted for three school years, as well as student activities, and sometimes home lives. We need to think about what the needs are and how we best address these. There will be more “Think Tank” sessions through March. Plans have also started for high school summer school led by SJHS teacher Josh Eastwood. The program was subsidized by ASD-S last summer so more students could attend. We are exploring ways to have satellite operations in our smaller communities.

Despite the restrictions for school based and extra-curricular activities many schools had fun student activities planned last week – twin day, bad hair day, teachers dressing as students and students as teachers, PJ days etc. Many schools shared pictures on twitter – KVHS enjoyed their first student assembly on Friday, March 4, 2022 to introduce their new mascot, “Knickie the

Knight,” as KVHS will now be the home of the “Blue Knights.” This is a rebranding activity that has been in the planning stages for some time. It was great to be part of a school assembly once again! Students have missed these activities to build school spirit! Staff and students at SJHS are fundraising to support relief efforts and raise awareness about the on-going invasion of Ukraine. Hats off to teacher Evan Hachey who has agreed to have students cut his long hair. Students have put together baskets and tickets are being sold. As of Friday, they had over \$3K and the efforts will continue until March 18.

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

February is Black History Month. We hosted a virtual presentation by Bill Riley for 100 teachers, the video was released to participants and to the Department. Riley was the third person of color to play in the NHL. Coordinator Laura Taylor has a book study with “Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,” by Zaretta Hammond. By the end of March eight schools will complete the Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive Schools.

Lesson plans, resources and how to teach about the Ukraine crisis have been gathered and shared on TEAMS. Supports for students connected to the Ukraine community resources have been shared on TEAMS.

Two meetings have been held for those teachers reading “Inconvenient Indian,” (36 participants), and “Taapoategl and Pallet: Mi’kmaq Journey of Survival and Loss” (28 participants). There is a K to 5 First Nations PLC with 45 members from 27 elementary schools and in February there was professional learning on the seven sacred teachings.

**OTHER:**

On Monday, February 28, 2022 representatives of the Department visited the Career Workrooms at KVHS (a.m.) and Simonds High School (p.m.). ASD-S has had a long-time partnership with Post-Secondary Education Training and Labor and over time the concept of the workroom has grown from Simonds and KVHS to include a presence in each of our high schools. There is a site at St. Stephen High, Sussex Regional High School with outreach to other schools in the area. This initiative is overseen by Beth Horgan, a retired high school principal in SJEC who works as a School to Work Coordinator overseeing Co-Op and the Workrooms and their staff. We are the only District to have such a partnership and it is very valuable to students, and the community as the staff at the facilities are open to community members. PETL collects monthly data on the number of people supported.

In early April ASD-S will have 18 school principals attend a conference in Banff called u Lead – The Summit of Educational Leadership. The Department funded the conference registration fee for 10 participants, however, we had many more who wanted to attend. Some will receive support through NBTA travel grants, and we will cover the balance of hotel, air fare and the cost of supply teachers for the 3-4 days. The theme of the conference is, “Reimagining School Leadership.”

ASD-S has arranged for Sally Wells, a professor in the faculty of law at UNB and well known workshop facilitator in the area of mediation and conflict resolution to offer a two day session in late March for a group of 14 school and district leaders. Director of Human Resources, Susan Moffatt and I attended the ADR-Mediation Skills Training in December and wanted to make the opportunity available for some of our leaders.

In February the Directors and I met virtually, after school with the local NBTA/AEFNB Branches by Education Centre. It is important to hear their collective concerns and challenges.

Z. Watson