

Superintendent's Report for DEC

November 10, 2021

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

Since our October 13 DEC meeting, several schools have been impacted by outbreaks of COVID 19, with multiple cases at Loch Lomond Elementary School and Simonds High School in Saint John. On the weekend Dr. Barker made the recommendation that unvaccinated students and staff at these two schools be placed on a 14-day isolation. Dr. Barker consults with the Assistant Deputy Minister and me as we work through this process. The weekend of October 23 there were outbreaks at Forest Hills, St. Stephen Middle School and St. Stephen High School and on the evening of Wednesday October 27 at Loch Lomond, Simonds, and Saint John the Baptist King Edward, on Thursday at Island View Elementary School and last weekend at Simonds, Loch Lomond, Champlain Heights, Bayside Middle School in Saint John, and Hammond River Valley Elementary. A few schools did require an Operational Day to get communication to the families impacted. In recent weeks the province was offering Point of Care/rapid testing kits to unvaccinated staff and students in the event of an outbreak and that was working very smoothly with kits being ordered provincially, distributed to schools by the District, with help being offered to distribute kits to families and check results. This distribution was suspended on Monday, November 1, 2021. Many District staff signed up to assist schools with this process.

The District and schools have continued to stay updated with the provincial covid protocols - one major change was introduced on October 22 with the requirement of having vaccinations checked for attendance at outside extra curricular activities, in addition to masking and distancing. The checking of vaccination status went well, however masking and distancing are very difficult to enforce. Most sport activities have been outside this fall with softball, field hockey, soccer, football. Next week hockey and basketball begin, and some schools are anxious about this, however, understand how important spectators are for players and their families. Principals and coaches will be looking for volunteer family members to assist with this important function. We have had very few games and sport activities since Thursday, October 28, 2021.

Another area in need of clarification has been extra-curricular band activities, particularly the use of wood wind and brass instruments. To participate in extra-curricular activities students must have proof of being fully vaccinated. This has been a challenge for middle school bands and the SISTEMA program where students under the age of 12 participate, as well as those schools using instruments to deliver curriculum music outcomes. Recently a decision was made that students under the age of 12 could use wood wind instruments inside, and if part of a middle school basketball team, could play without wearing their masks, as grades 7-8 do. There are many scenarios and questions that we work through each day with schools.

The 9th Annual ASD-S Physical Activity Challenge began Nov. 1 and runs until Dec. 4. The challenge is open to all staff and members are asked to complete a minimum of 150 minutes of physical activity per week. There's also a bonus Team with weekly challenges for those who want to do extra. Over 400 employees have signed up.

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

“Take Me Outside Day” happened on October 20. Educators were encouraged to take students outside for a minimum 30-minute lesson. Coaches and coordinators created a bank of lesson plans, and a district video was shared with examples. Over 254 educators participated in the challenge and there was a random draw for prizes (materials to support future learning outdoors endeavors). You can view pictures on Twitter by searching #tmoasds2021

On October 22, thirty-three teacher coaches and coordinators participated in professional learning on how to help teachers teach outdoors. Tips and tricks were provided, and staff participated in a hands-on outdoor session with practical activities that they could use with students.

The SJEC K-2 project, “When Children Succeed” continues for the third and final year with a partnership between BCAPI (Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative), Living SJ, EECD and our District. The project saw 21 additional teachers placed at K-2 in these schools with high needs and high rates of childhood poverty (St. John the Baptist, Hazen White, Centennial, Glen Falls, Seaside Park, Prince Charles, Princess Elizabeth), with the goal of making class sizes smaller. The maximum class size is 21 at grades K-2. The initiative began in 2018-19, with year two ending abruptly with the start of the pandemic in March 2020. For school year 2020-2021, with the

pandemic and the Department covering the cost of additional K-5 teachers and many unknowns, the third year of the project did not formally take place with data collection. The research component of the project has now re-started. The additional teachers are being used to increase the educator supports at K-2 – i.e., intervention teachers, resource, guidance, increasing administration time at the school, and collecting consistent data on a regular basis in literacy, numeracy, behavior and attendance. A Speech Language Pathologist is also attached to the project. It is structured as a formal management project (PDCA – Plan Do Check Act). Daily PDCA huddles are occurring at the schools, led by a co-teacher. These huddles focus on phonological awareness, phonics, numeracy, and oral language data to identify personalized strategies to support student learning. Literacy and numeracy data is submitted to the district monthly. The process is overseen by the School Improvement Coordinator Nick Munn and supported by the Elementary Numeracy and Literacy Coordinators. Directors Ryan Price, Melissa Savoie and I are very involved in the project. We are very grateful to the partners for their on-going support in funding positions and advocating for additional supports for schools with a high percentage of needs.

Curriculum Coaches continue to embed themselves in schools, holding drop-in sessions with teachers to support the use of Microsoft TEAMS as a Learning Management System. They made themselves available to schools who were experiencing operational days to support online learning. The technology coaches continue to hold “Tech Thursdays” on topics that would be useful to teachers in the event of a school closure, including Lumio, Teams, Powerpoint Live and the use of QR codes to help students connect to the lesson more easily. During the month of October, the team worked with approximately 170 teachers in 50 schools. This week with learning from home the coaches have been available for tech support and have had 185 teachers seek help.

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.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Training, Level One, completed for new staff (VPs, Behavior Intervention Mentors, Counsellors) by Peter Smith & Jennifer Grant, Oct 20 & 21. VTRA training teaches professionals to recognize and intervene as a team when an individual is on a

pathway to serious violence. All administrators, school counsellors, and behaviour intervention mentors have Level One training.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment Training, Level Two, completed by ten staff (administrators and counselors) by Kevin Cameron, in partnership with ASD-West, October 19 & 20. Kevin Cameron is the Executive Director of the North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response and creator of the VTRA protocol.

Traumatic Events Systems (TES) Training completed by two counselling coaches (Rob Mather & Jessica Bellis) by Kevin Cameron, in partnership with ASD-W. TES helps our coaches when responding to a crisis in school, such as the death of a student.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) completed by new administrators and school counsellors/guidance teachers by Jennifer Grant and Pam Miller. ASIST is the standard training to assist an individual who is considering suicide. We ensure that all our counsellors and guidance teachers are trained and are working to have administrators trained as well.

The team of 13 Curriculum Subject Coordinators participated in a PD on “Positive Education,” and they plan to embed positive education in at least one professional learning session in each subject area and support the Social Emotional Learning Coach with requests for support focused on Positive Education in curriculum.

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

Our Antiracism & Equity Coach, Therese Trofimencoff, has been especially busy. She has visited seven high schools to provide professional learning on antiracism and equity, been a guest speaker (virtually) in classes, and has consulted one-on-one with many teachers who have questions. She has written eight articles for Southern Exposure about different elements of antiracist education, which is often a difficult topic for people. Her October focus was middle schools.

In November/December there will be professional learning for school counsellors focused on the counsellor’s role in anti-racism.

We have very active GSA's in middle and high schools – Gender Sexuality Alliance. The day planned for the GSA's had to be postponed due to the job action. The focus of this day will be on being a good ally. ASD-S high schools were looking forward to the Pride in Education Conference, scheduled for Saturday, October 30 and that had to be postponed as well.

Beginning Teacher Professional Learning was postponed – the Education Support Services Team will work with first year teachers on relationship building, antiracism, LGBTQ+ concerns, and trauma-informed classrooms.

District facilities staff member Joe Theriault received the CUPE National Ed Blackman award, in recognition of remarkable leadership, in the pursuit of advancing racial justice for all Black and racialized members. Ed Blackman was a proud CUPE member at both national and local levels. Joe is a member of PRUDE and recently nominated ASD-S for a PRUDE Cultural Diversity Award. This fall two ASD-S staff have been nominated for a PRUDE award, Principal Christine Roy from St John the Baptist King Edward School in Saint John and Lynn MacDonald, Coordinator of our Welcome Centre for newcomer and international students. The award ceremony is November 19, 2021.

ASDS-S has launched an anti-bias, anti-racism education grant. Ten literacy teachers from grades 6-12 will be awarded the grant to do a book study and receive several diverse texts to add to their classroom library.

Twelve schools have registered to participate in the “Welcoming Schools Initiative,” – Harbour View High, Princess Elizabeth, Sussex Regional, Millidgeville North, Fairvale Elementary, Lakewood Heights, Centennial, Seaside Park, Bayside Middle, Rothesay High, Simonds and Campobello. The document for this program has been updated and a personalized presentation for the PLC (Professional Learning Community) from each school was made reflecting the school data and their SIP. Schools look at their strengths, and challenges and set goals.

First Nations initiatives continue with Christy Jordan, author of *Fatty Leg* and *When I was Eight*. She visited schools virtually each Friday in October for classes at all grade levels. Rhonda Daltrop, a teacher at M. Gerald Teed is leading a monthly PLC on indigenizing the curriculum through project-based learning.

OTHER

November 19 is a half-day Parent Teacher (Virtual) for high schools, and half-day school-based PD. At K-8 it is a half-day school-based PD, and a half-day for report card preparation.

December 4 is a high school PD Day with several schools coming together for a focus on assessment with a virtual visit by Sandra Herbst, a well-known author and speaker on this topic. At K-8 it is half-day of virtual Parent Teacher and half-day of school-based PD.

The District is monitoring the number of PD sessions being held to ensure we have adequate supply teachers to fill vacancies. The priority is to have teachers in the classroom. We have had to cancel a few bus runs this fall due to a shortage of bus drivers. Recruitment of casual staff has been an on-going challenge through the pandemic.