

Superintendent's Report for DEC

October 13, 2021

ENDS #1: Provide positive, safe, healthy, and inclusive learning and working environments for children, youth, and staff.

ASD-S was very fortunate the first three weeks of school not to have any outbreaks of COVID 19. This allowed us to get our school year up and running and many questions answered about the start-up guidelines as they did change mid-September with enhanced masking. Since Thursday, September 23, we have had outbreaks at Kennebecasis Valley High School, Sussex Elementary, Apohaqui Elementary, Hampton Elementary, Hampton Middle School, Chris Saunders Memorial in the KV, Fairvale Elementary in Rothesay, Campobello Island Consolidated School, Simonds High School, Forest Hills and Loch Lomond Elementary Schools in east Saint John. Of these eleven schools, four have had more than one outbreak. We have also had buses involved and have had to involve other schools as many of our buses have mixed grade levels on the bus, especially for morning runs. We work with Transportation staff to ensure we are connecting with all families. We had one bus which had students from four schools in addition to the school attended by our positive case. We have asked families to consider driving their students to school if that is possible – with the variant, if a positive case has been on a school bus, all students on that bus are considered close contacts.

Contract tracing has changed significantly this fall given the higher volume of cases – a call comes from Public Health identifying an outbreak and the first call is to the principal to discuss the details shared by Public Health after their conversation with the family. The principal is then asked to begin the process of identifying all direct contacts with the case during the period the student/staff was infectious. A letter from me is prepared to be sent to all families on School Messenger, indicating there has been an outbreak and we are working through the process of identifying the direct contacts. Last year Public Health Nurses would make phone calls to the families of each direct contact, however, with the variants and increased cases this is not possible. Public Health send to us a letter to be sent to staff and students identified as direct contacts with specific information about what to do if vaccinated or unvaccinated. The vaccine is not available for students under age 12 so up until this week the only option for the under 12 age group was learn

from home while self-isolating. Those fully vaccinated adults/students are directed to self-monitor for symptoms for the dates identified by Public Health.

This changed last week with the announcement of the voluntary rapid testing/point of care (POC) testing for those unvaccinated and identified as close contacts of a positive case. There were many questions about this process, and we continue to work through it. Late last week when we had an outbreak at Campobello Consolidated, Forest Hills and Simonds High School, we took the opportunity of ordering the POC rapid tests, and on Friday distributing them to the unvaccinated close contacts at the three schools. We deliver the tests to the school and a time is set by the principal for families to pick up the kits, often outside. For these three schools the direction was to have one test on Monday evening (Thanksgiving Day), and a second on Tuesday morning, October 12 and if both tests are negative the student brings the small testing cartridge to school and a staff person or District Office staff person makes a note and the cartridge is placed in a hazardous waste bag. This allows students to be in school through the isolation period and staff can continue to work. Again families/staff can opt to participate in rapid testing or self-isolate for the specified time 14-day period from date of exposure.

Larger high schools were offered a “pop up covid vaccination clinic” the week of September 20 and participation rates ranged from a high of 60 students to 20 students. The nurses also visited our K-12 schools Grand Manan and Campobello and our Grades 6-12 schools (Sir James Dunn, Fundy, and Belleisle Regional). It was later that week that the Department announced students ages 12 and over required proof of full vaccination to participate in all extra-curricular activities which includes clubs, sports, drama, student council, and yearbook. This information is collected at the school level. A few high schools have asked families to provide the information voluntarily, so they are better prepared in the event of a positive case.

Toward the end of September, our rentals opened once again for only youth-oriented activities, and organizers must ensure the students are fully vaccinated if they are 12 years of age and over and the onus is on that organizer to ensure the group complies and lists of participants are kept for contact tracing.

When outbreaks happen, quick action is required and in ASD-S our team has expanded from Jessica Hanlon, Public Health Nurse Ann Hogan and me, to include Marc Godin, our Data and Accountability Supervisor - part-time as required, and retired Director of Schools (SJEC) Paul Smith, part-time as required. We are grateful for the support we receive from the nurses and

appreciate they are very busy. We have had cases impacting schools but have not had the high number other Districts have had.

Our Physical Education Coordinator Kari Parsons continues to focus on professional learning for teaching P.E. outdoors, and a tip sheet has been developed and shared. ASD-S is having a “Take Me Outside Day,” on October 20, coaches and coordinators are compiling activities to share with teachers to promote learning outdoors. Extra-curricular sports activities are occurring across ASD-S following the provincial Healthy and Safe School Guidelines.

Several schools applied for Jumpstart grant funding from Canadian Tire over the summer and purchased new equipment – Hammond River Valley, Beaconsfield, Barnhill, Glen Falls and Seaside Park to name a few.

Ms. Parsons worked with Community Engagement Coordinator Erica Lane and I to divide the funds we receive from our department for “Healthy Minds,” breakfast and lunch programs. Over the years, data is kept on the budgets allocated to schools and the amount spent. This year we had \$166,000 for these programs. We are grateful that many schools have community partners supporting food programs, and others that apply for grants. Some money is held centrally in case additional is required.

ENDS #2: Demonstrate continuous improvement by increasing engagement through innovative teaching and assessment practices, promoting mental fitness through social-emotional learning.

Our Curriculum Coaches have been very engaged in professional learning opportunities for teachers, however we do have to monitor the number of supply teachers picking up the daily supply work. We have several casual staff who have not taken work this year and have not presented their proof of full vaccination. Any staff not fully vaccinated must participate in rapid testing on Monday-Wednesday-Friday and be always masked inside and outside the school. Our goal is to have all casual positions filled daily. It is challenging for schools when jobs are not filled – be it teachers, EA’s, drivers or custodians.

Two sessions were held for teachers of grades 6-8 PDCP (Personal Development and Career Planning) and grades 9-10 PDCP with a focus on three themes; human growth and development,

social emotional learning and career development and ensuring schools are using and implementing “myBlueprint.”

Christine Morgan-Ahearn is working as our new Positive Education and Social Emotional Learning Coach to support teachers – this is a new coach position given the pandemic and the provincial and district focus of integrating social and emotional learning into curriculum delivery. Through the pandemic we have seen the benefit of building relationships with students and focusing on their social and emotional well-being. Christine’s initial focus is on middle schools, and being very intentional about embedding SEL. On October 19 the first of two sessions for beginning teachers will be offered jointly by ESS and Curriculum – the goal is to build awareness about Social Emotional Learning, Policies such as 322 (Inclusion) and Policy 713 (Sexual Orientation), and diversity.

Each Education Centre offered PD to elementary resource teachers in September and the October focus is middle school, and November high schools. Topics included the needs assessment process when determining school needs for EA’s, ESS Connect, and requests for support and service. We continue to have as a priority building the capacity of our resource teachers. This position is key in our schools and the knowledge they require continues to expand. ASIST Training for Suicide Awareness will be offered October 13 and 14, 2021 for new counsellors and administrators.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of attending a ceremony outside at Fundy Middle and High School for the unveiling of a large mental health and suicide awareness banner on the utility pole at the top of the driveway – the banner gives contact information for local support such as Suicide Prevention, Kids Help Phone, Addictions and Mental Health, etc. This is spearheaded by one of our IT staff in the St. Stephen Education Centre, Tony Cooke, whose son died by suicide in 2018. There are now four banners in St. George with a plan to have this initiative expand. Principal Patrick McDade and representatives of the Student Council were present, and Mr. McDade spoke about awareness being the focus of the Student Council this year, having one member of the Council being dedicated to spearheading mental health initiatives at the school. Congratulations Fundy and thank you Tony! We look forward to partnering with you!

Coordinator Darren White and his team of four coaches have worked with high school teachers on BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), and with K-8 teachers to ensure a school is ready if they

must move to learning from home. At upper elementary and middle level, inventories are being taken on the number of families requiring a loaner laptop if learn from home is required. In September, Darren's team worked with approximately 230 teachers at 61 schools.

The application process for ASD-S Innovation Grants has opened – this is funded through our self-sustaining funds – 88 applications were received by September 30, and these are being reviewed now.

Professional learning for French Second Language continues – evening training for teachers wanting to improve their French proficiency, introduction of a new grade 5 FI curriculum, twenty-eight teachers who are new to their grade level and participated in modules, new FI teachers have been offered support as well with after school virtual sessions on evaluating reading and writing. It continues to be a challenge to find qualified FSL teachers and we recognize the intense recruitment done by HR and the FSL Coordinators.

In numeracy, the five curriculum coaches ensured all teachers have the appropriate documents and resources to support curriculum delivery. Support is offered to those new to teaching and new at their level.

ASD-West invited our music teachers to attend a roster of 12 afterschool virtual PD sessions offered by their music teachers. We hope to reciprocate in the year with a similar offer. It is great to see the cross-District collaboration and sharing of expertise.

Our Welcome Centre has registered 360 new students from March 1, 2021 – end of September 2021 and of these, 283 are receiving EAL (English as an Additional Language) support bringing our total to 743 students having direct EAL support. We have hired seven EAL assessors (retired teachers) to do intake EAL assessments of new students. A “Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive School Newsletter” is being prepared and shared monthly with teachers. An EAL *Twitter* account has been set up to share information and celebrate teachers and each school has been asked to identify a “culture champion.” PD has now been set up for sessions such as, “Every Teacher is a Language Teacher,” “Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive School” course, and a book study. The EAL team have connected with outside partners such as PRUDE, the Multicultural Association, and the YMCA Newcomer Connections. Ever growing!

ENDS #3: Ensure all members of the school community are welcomed, respected, accepted and supported and to address heterosexism and discrimination.

Therese Trofimencoff is working as our new anti-racism and equity teacher coach – she has been connecting with our community partners (Black Lives Matter, PRUDE) and has started working with staff around building awareness. She has been including information in Southern Exposure to increase her visibility with educators and has visited ten of the 14 high schools to spark ideas and conversations about how to diversify classroom practices and how to make classroom assessments more culturally inclusive.

Peter Smith ordered large, laminated posters from UNB that feature prominent black citizens of NB and their accomplishments. Many have meaningful connections to specific geographical areas of ASD-S and he delivered these to schools for display – e.g. the first black lawyer in Canada came from Kars, near Belleisle, and had an office in uptown SJ, so posters were purchased for Belleisle, SJHS and St. Malachys.

On October 7, 2021, high school guidance counsellors and GSA leaders met with Alicia Lapointe from the University of Western Ontario. We have embarked on a research partnership with Western to determine how effective GSAs are in providing support and education to our LGNTQ+ youth. Members of the District LGBTQ+ committee attended this session as well to lend their voice to the needs of our LGBTQ+ students.

ENDS #4: Maximize the engagement of families and the community through effective communication and outreach.

PALS (Partners Assisting Local Schools) is the recipient of the YMCA Red Triangle Award. Unfortunately, the ceremony will be virtual and is being taped this week in the garden donated by our PALS partners at Prince Charles School. Mrs. Doyle and a few students will participate. Mr. Irving insisted that I receive this award along with him and say a few words on behalf of our District. We were photographed together for the press release as he sees this being a joint award and not about him. He is an inspiration!

Recent communication activities can be found here: https://nbed-my.sharepoint.com/:o/g/personal/jessica_hanlon_nbed_nb_ca/EvPfjns79rREkZ3sftv9RJ8BUueLebKKyzLSNBMTMrH3KA

OTHER

Helen Johnson, long-time Educational Support Services Subject Coordinator in the St. Stephen Education Centre retired at the end of September. Her expertise will certainly be missed – her replacement is Alison England-Blanchard who originally worked in Rothesay and for the last several years has worked as a resource teacher in St. Andrews and St. Stephen and most recently has been a coach/lead teacher in the Education Centre.

On Saturday, October 2, 2021 I was invited to participate in an international panel discussion as part of the “Women in Education Leadership Symposium” virtually. The focus was on leadership during the pandemic. Education leaders from Turkey, Zimbabwe, South Africa, North Carolina, and Thailand participated.