

## AJ Smeltzer Jr. High Community Report 2015-16

It has been a great year of learning and growth at AJ Smeltzer. During the current school year teachers and support staff have engaged in numerous professional development (PD) opportunities, which have included:

- Math PD
- Data coaching
- French Instructional PD
- Caring School Community
- Assistive Technology
- SEIRC (Special Education Implementation Review Committee) training
- Student Support Planning PD
- Technology Integration
- Google Apps for Education
- Trauma PD
- Health Promotion
- Literacy Implementation
- Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights in Learning
- Assessment Preparation
- TIENET (Technology for Improving Education Network)

This was our first year in Student Success Planning (SSP) development (formerly continuous school improvement). This has been a journey of reflection, learning, and growth. As a staff we embarked upon a self-assessment process in which we examined student achievement data (classroom-based as well as provincial) and teacher practice in order to determine specific areas needing improvement (for students and staff). We determined that students need to improve organization and communication of ideas in their writing, as well as their ability to problem solve and communicate their ideas in mathematics. With respect to instructional and assessment practices our plan clearly outlines the learning needed in order to improve in these areas. Specifically, teachers have begun to work toward a common understanding and implementation of best practice in literacy (workshop model) and mathematics (constructivist 3-part lesson model). Teachers have worked with a math and literacy coach to improve their understanding and implementation of these practices, and, as per our plan, have begun to work on clear and timely feedback and success criteria with students (ex. using 'I Can' statements with students so that students can clearly see the sequential steps they need to do in order to demonstrate their understanding). Teachers have expressed success in feedback improvement.

During the current school year, grade 6 teachers implemented Caring School Community, which is a social-emotional learning based program used to establish classroom climates that promote safety and a great sense of community amongst the students. Teachers and school administration worked closely with the Halifax Regional Schools Board's (HRSB) Safe Schools Consultant regarding implementation,

monitoring, and feedback. In the upcoming school year this work will continue with the goal to expand the program to the junior high classes.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are groups of educators who meet weekly to share expertise and work collaboratively to improve teaching practice and therefore, student achievement. At AJ Smeltzer PLCs are embedded within ELA/FLA, math, and grade 6 teacher's schedules weekly. This year we have seen great growth and improvement with respect to the structure, conversation, and ultimately the action-orientated work being done within PLCs. Teachers understand that the PLC is the vehicle that drives the SSP plan and therefore student improvement. They understand that every PLC should determine an action/assessment/mini lesson to be implemented prior to the next meeting, and that the information obtained from that action/assessment/mini lesson will drive the next PLC conversation. Teachers have an increased understanding of collecting and analyzing classroom assessment data in a consistent manner, but recognize the need for further improvement in this area and so this is a focus of our work in the upcoming school year.

### 2014-2015 Provincial Assessment Data

Provincial Assessments		
	School (%) 2015-16	Board (%) 2015-16
<b>Literacy Assessments</b>		
<b>Grade 6 Provincial</b>		
Reading	63%	76%
Writing - Ideas	68%	82%
Writing - Organization	46%	68%
Writing - Language Use	53%	72%
Writing - Conventions	51%	65%
<b>Grade 8 Provincial</b>		
Reading	64%	76%
Writing - Ideas	79%	91%
Writing - Organization	64%	80%
Writing - Language Use	74%	82%
Writing - Conventions	52%	70%
<b>Math Assessments</b>		
<b>Grade 6 Provincial</b>		
Mathematics	59%	72%
<b>Grade 8 Provincial</b>		
Mathematics	31%	63%

With respect to the literacy assessment specifically, grade 6 and 8 students had the greatest success with ideas in their writing (68% and 79%). The greatest area of challenge was writing organization in grade 6 (46%), and writing conventions in grade 8 (52%). While students demonstrated difficulty with mathematics concepts (59% and 31% respectively) it should be noted that these results have improved from last year's results.

In the upcoming school year our grade 8 students will be in high school. The results of these assessments will be shared with school administration and teachers at these respective sites so that individual plans can be put in place to support these students in order to improve their achievement in specific areas.

As a school we recognize that these results must be interpreted in conjunction with everyday formative assessment teachers gather to gauge student understanding of the learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers have reflected upon these results in light of day-to-day assessment information and will continue to do so in an effort to improve instruction and student success in literacy and mathematics. Further, collaborative planning and learning will continue next year, with PLCs as the vehicle to foster such conversations in which teachers will continue to examine trends in data in order to work toward our school-wide goals in literacy and math.