

Bel Ayr Elementary



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School and Community Context

Bel Ayr Elementary School was built in the mid 1960's and since then has had periods of fluctuation in enrollment. In recent years the population was on the decline but a boundary review conducted by the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) in the spring of 2005 brought a portion of Portland Estates into Bel Ayr boundaries and has caused our enrollment to stabilize. We currently have 225 students in ten classrooms with class size ranging from 20 - 26.

The staff at Bel Ayr tends to be consistent over time with few annual staffing changes. Our population of students also tends to be stable with most students remaining at Bel Ayr from Primary to Grade 6. In fact, many of our parents are former Bel Ayr graduates.

We are also experiencing an increase in cultural diversity and students for whom English is a second language. Bel Ayr offers English pro-

gramming with core French beginning in Grade 4. Children who reside in the Bel Ayr area have the option of attending French Immersion at Shannon Park school with primary being the entry point for this program.

Bel Ayr school is very fortunate to have enhanced music programming. Strings (violin and cello) and choir begin in Grade 4 and band in Grade 6. Our students are also eligible to audition for All City musical groups. Bel Ayr students have a variety of opportunities for activities that promote a physically active lifestyle as well as student leadership. Peer mediators, ECO Team, intramural sports and school spirit teams are examples of the variety of activities offered.

We continuously seek to ensure that teacher instruction, resources and school presentations reflect and foster a respect for diversity.



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Family and Community Involvement

Bel Ayr is blessed by the quality and quantity of parent involvement on a regular basis.

Our Home and School Association does an outstanding job of enhancing school life by planning special events and raising funds to support many programs.

In a recent survey 97% of parents indicated they feel welcomed at Bel Ayr and 92% of parents feel appreciated by school staff.

Our School Advisory Council provides regular support to school administration on a variety of issues.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Our school data over the past five years consistently indicates that most students, staff and parents see Bel Ayr School as a safe place. We continue to focus on a safe and orderly environment through implementing Positive Effective Behavior Supports (PEBS). Under the PEBS umbrella, children are taught specific behavior expectations in various school locations and the importance of respect for self, others and the environment.

Our Stars of the Month and Respect Bear assemblies are monthly celebrations to recognize students who model good citizenship behaviors.

Students take part in a variety of information sessions on topics such as bullying, internet safety and Stranger Danger that are delivered by our school Police Liaison Officer, invited guests or classroom teachers.

Provincial and Board Assessment Results

Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) students participated in provincial and board-wide assessments. The information gained through these assessments will help us determine our next steps in improving student achievement in literacy and mathematics. Please note that the percentages used throughout this report are rounded to the nearest whole number.

* French Immersion students completed the assessment in French.

Literacy Assessments	School Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations	Board Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations
Grade 2 HRSB Literacy Reading	English Program Accuracy: 82% English Program Fluency: 64%	English Program Accuracy: 74% English Program Fluency: 67%
Grade 3 DOE Literacy	Reading: 95% Writing (Information) : 86% Writing (Narrative) : 91%	Reading: 80% Writing (Information) : 80% Writing (Narrative) : 87%
Grade 5 HRSB Literacy	English Program Reading: 100%	English Program Reading: 82%
Grade 6 DOE Literacy	Reading: 94% Writing: 97%	Reading: 88% Writing: 94%
Mathematics Assessments	School Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations	Board Results: Percentage of students meeting expectations
*Grade 2 HRSB Mathematics	100%	95%
*Grade 3 DOE Mathematics (June 2008)	94%	71%
*Grade 5 HRSB Mathematics	100%	84%

Bel Ayr students consistently demonstrate strong performance on these assessments. There is however, always room for improvement and the data collected assists us in developing school goals for focus.

Reading fluency, for example, indicates that 64% of Grade 2 students met expectations. This is up significantly from when we began tracking five years ago (40%). We realize that this needs to continue to be an area of focus and therefore, made it a school goal to continue to track and assess. Research tells us that a child's reading fluency directly impacts his/her understanding (comprehension) of material read.

Staff professional development is also planned according to assessment information. There is an expectation that all teachers are continuously tracking the progress of all students. By doing this, progress can be monitored and interventions planned for continuous improvement.

Classroom Assessment

Focus on literacy comprehension (P- 2):

The percentage of students who reached the target for comprehension increased considerably from first to third term. Assessed Grade 1 students increased from 79% to 91% and Grade 2 students increased from 84% to 94%. Primary students were not assessed due to reading ability, however, reading comprehension skills were taught. Focus on fluency (3-6). This is our first year of commonly assessing reading fluency and data collected to date indicates that more standardization of the assessment process needs to occur before findings can be conclusive.

Focus on problem solving and mathematical communication (P-6):

Students ability to communicate their mathematical thinking using models, pictures, symbols and words in daily math lessons was assessed. Classroom assessments were conducted at the end of each term using specific scoring criteria selected by the math lead team. Most improvement occurred in student ability to document their approach and reasoning (83% increase) and the area of least improvement was finding the solution (16% increase). This data will inform our planning as we move forward.

Technology: Focus on improved student use of technology to present information. This goal is in initial stages of implementation since there were issues of technology inventories, organization and teacher skills to be addressed. A recent survey of staff indicates that there has been an increase in staff knowledge of the Department of Education technology outcomes for their grade level (31%- 61%), and there has been improved common staff professional development.



Student Engagement

Bel Ayr teachers spend a considerable amount of time implementing strategies for differentiated instruction. This acknowledges that students may learn differently. A variety of opportunities need to be provided for students to acquire knowledge and demonstrate what they have learned. 80% of students like what they are reading and writing while 70% indicate they like what they are learning in math. Sixty-six percent felt they were good at sharing their ideas in language arts (reading and writing) and math. We will continue to explore ways of engaging children by ensuring instruction is interesting to all learners and they have opportunities to share what they have learned.

Time to Learn

All schools in the Halifax Regional School Board follow the time to learn requirements set by the Department of Education. This means that each subject has a required or recommended number of minutes to be taught each week. We endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, interruptions during the instructional day. 100% of teachers recently surveyed felt that student learning is not interrupted significantly by announcements or extra-curricular activities. However, four respondents felt that student discipline issues can sometimes interrupt learning time. Our school planning team provides interventions and support when discipline issues arise.

Professional Development

Teachers at Bel Ayr are continuously involved in professional development. PD may be site designed to support our school Plan for Improvement, may be offered by the HRSB to enhance teacher skills in new educational initiatives or may be offered by the Department of Education as support for curriculum implementation. We have a literacy coach on staff 25% and access to a math leader who provide PD and co-teach with classroom teachers to implement best educational practices.

Our three school goals in math, literacy and technology each have a professional development plan to support the goal implementation. We have established Professional Learning Communities that meet to reflect upon and take action to improve student achievement. Teachers annually develop personal professional growth plans in which they select individual goals and seek out opportunities for professional learning related to their goals.

Additional School Supports

We are very fortunate to have the expertise of many professionals as we program plan for the success of all students socially and academically.

The list includes but is not limited to:

- resource teacher
- Learning Centre teacher
- literacy coach
- math leader
- school social work
- English as a Second Language teacher
- speech language pathologist
- educational program assistants
- school psychologist
- public health nurse
- Reading Recovery teacher
- library support specialist
- behavior support specialist
- autism team

There are also other support personnel available from a variety of agencies that can be accessed as required. Our Police Liaison Officer is one example.



Planning for Improvement

All schools in Nova Scotia are required to complete a five-year process which is referred to as accreditation in some boards but known as Planning for Improvement in the HRSB. During 2007-2008 Bel Ayr School began this process. Year one involved conducting an intensive school self-assessment in which volumes of school data, covering many areas, was sifted through and analyzed to determine authentic goals for Bel Ayr school. In May 2008 an external team spent three days on site determining if the goals selected were valid for our school. All staff was involved in this goal setting process.

Our school staff have chosen goals in the areas of literacy, math and technology. We discovered that in literacy our lower elementary students (P-2) need to improve skills

in questioning and making connections to the text they read. This will improve their ability to extract, remember and use information. In upper elementary (3-6) our focus is on reading fluency. Improved fluency will enhance student comprehension of written material. In math we will address student ability to represent what they learn in a variety of ways. This ensures that math instruction supports the learning styles of all students. In technology our goal is to increase the opportunities and skills children have to use technology in various subject areas.

We are very pleased with the progress made during 2008-2009 and will continue to provide updates.

School Goals

Literacy Goal

Grade P-2

Students will be able to make connections from the text by activating prior knowledge and asking questions of themselves, the authors, and the texts they are reading.

Grade 3-6

Students will demonstrate an improved ability to read at an appropriate rate in meaningful phrases with intonation and expression.

Strategies:

1. Examine current research to ensure teachers have a common understanding of fluency and comprehension.
2. Use instructional strategies that develop student comprehension and fluency.
3. Use language that is scholarly and precise creating a common language for discussing books and ideas.
4. Teach each strategy separately and in depth but show how one strategy can build on another
5. Review and practice using available resources for assessing and teaching comprehension and fluency.
6. Purchase materials that support fluency activities such as tape record-

ers and classroom karaoke machines.

7. Instruct students on how to self assess for fluency such as listening to their own recorded reading.

8. Share assessment results including classroom evidence (through PLC discussions) on a regular basis and discuss strategies for future action.

Numeracy Goal

Grades P-6 -Students will demonstrate improved problem solving ability using a variety of strategies and representations to communicate mathematical thinking.

Strategies:

1. Identify math language to be consistent at each grade level and the progression of the language across grade levels.
2. Create and/or identify appropriate rubrics or other assessment tools to assess the goal.
3. Ensure our problem solving instruction and assessments are included in mathematical instruction across strands.
4. Develop a common understanding among staff of the five representations.
5. Develop instructional strategies

that provide opportunities for students to engage in independent and collaborative learning.

6. Develop the tool to be used to collect school wide data and define the time frame around which the data will be collected.

Technology Goal

Students will apply information technology to present information to intended audiences.

Strategies:

1. Conduct a technology needs assessment with the assistance of HRSB technology integration staff.
2. Complete an inventory of current technology.
3. Secure resources to support student learning.
4. Implement the revised Bel Ayr Technology vision document.
5. Identify and determine the role of a school technology leader.
6. Enhance teacher ability to implement Department of Education technology outcomes and to utilize technology for authentic learning opportunities for all students.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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