

# Regional Executive Director's Report to School Communities in the Strait Region

February 2024

In this month's report, I am very pleased to share with you a number of activities and initiatives that are making a positive difference in the lives of our students and families. This month, our schools celebrated the African Heritage Month theme, ***Our Smiles, Our Joy, Our Resilience as African Nova Scotians***, which recognizes the spirit of perseverance people of African Descent have demonstrated over the centuries in Nova Scotia.

Each February, in particular, and continued throughout the year, teachers incorporate a variety of educational lessons in their classroom instruction that focus on the history, culture and achievements of people of African Descent to highlight the connection of our past to today and how this information shapes our understanding and cultural awareness. This month is also a time for each of us to reflect on our shared history and understanding of the contributions and traditions of people of African Descent and a wonderful opportunity to join in the celebration and promotion of the culture, legacy and achievements of people of African Descent in Nova Scotia – past and present. Please see Page 2 and 3 for more information.

As part of our goal to improve student well-being, achievement in literacy and mathematics and strengthen positive, safe, equitable and inclusive environments, I am pleased to share a Progress Report on the SRCE System Improvement Plan for 2023-2024, information on how schools are tracking and monitoring student progress using school data walls as well as a number of excellent examples of student learning in action throughout the SRCE. Please see Page 5 and 6 for additional details.

In addition, planning has now started for the 2024-2025 school year. Pre-primary and primary registrations have been completed and staffing plans are underway. As well at this time of year, the school calendar is in development and capital projects for the 2024-2025 are being considered. As with all plans, our number one goal of improving student well-being, achievement and success is at the forefront of all decisions.

As always, I encourage you to watch for information on our school and regional celebrations in print, on our website, [www.srce.ca](http://www.srce.ca) and X (formerly Twitter), [@SRCE\\_NS](https://twitter.com/SRCE_NS).

Sincerely,

Paul Landry

On December 1, 2023, I shared a letter from the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development with families, staff and school community members that announced a number of initiatives to be undertaken as a result of the [strengthening local voices in education engagement process](#).



  
**Public Engagement Session: Invitation**  
Tuesday, April 2, 2024  
6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre  
Strengthening Local Voices in Education  
Increasing local voice in education policy and decision-making

One of the initiatives to be led at the regional level is the introduction of Public Engagement Sessions. I am very pleased to invite you to our first **Public Engagement Session scheduled for Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre, 606 Reeves Street, Port Hawkesbury, NS.**

All are welcome to attend to join us for a discussion on student well-being, student achievement and capital planning.

We look forward to this opportunity to share information, receive feedback and respond to questions.

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Port Hawkesbury, NS B9A 2T9;  
[www.srce.ca](http://www.srce.ca); [srce@srce.ca](mailto:srce@srce.ca);  
(902) 625-2191/  
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[@SRCE\\_NS](https://twitter.com/SRCE_NS)



Paul Landry  
Regional Executive Director  
of Education

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## Upcoming Dates/Events

**Friday, March 8, 2024**  
International Women's Day

**March 11 to 15, 2024**  
March Break

**Thursday, March 21, 2024**  
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

## Transportation (Busing) Inquiries

For questions related to busing, bus stops and/or bus routes, please contact SRCE Transportation by email at [transportation@srce.ca](mailto:transportation@srce.ca) or by phone at 902-747-3645.

For busing emergencies, please contact SRCE Transportation staff by phone at 902-747-3642 (6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

## SRCE Celebrates African Heritage Month 2024: *Our Smiles, Our Joy, Our Resilience as African Nova Scotians*

February is recognized internationally as African Heritage Month – a time to celebrate and share the culture, history and achievements of people of African descent from all over the world. The African Heritage Month 2024 theme, *Our Smiles, Our Joy, Our Resilience as African Nova Scotians*, recognizes the spirit of perseverance people of African descent have demonstrated over the centuries in Nova Scotia.



Throughout the school year, and especially in February, teachers incorporate a variety of educational lessons in their classroom instruction that focus on the history, culture and achievements of people of African descent. African Heritage Month provides another opportunity for all of us to join in the celebration and promotion of the culture, legacy, achievements, and contributions of people of African descent in Nova Scotia – past and present.

As part of the celebrations again this year, the week of **February 12 to 16, 2024 was designated as African Heritage Month Reading Week**. During this week, community elders, parents, guardians and regional staff will be invited to read with students. In addition, teachers will incorporate the Re-Imagine African Heritage Month resources in a variety of thought-provoking educational lessons in their classroom instruction to support student learning as they listen to one another's perspectives, interpretation and views of the world; learn about our shared history; share and celebrate cultures; and discuss ways to act to make our communities a better place for all. These learning opportunities will focus on diversity, inclusion and equity to highlight the connection of our past to today and how this information shapes and enhances our understanding. This is also the perfect time for each of us to reflect on our shared history and understanding of the contributions and traditions of people of African descent.



To help celebrate African Heritage Month, Kathy Rhodes, SRCE Coordinator of African Canadian Education Services, visited with, and read the book [Change Sings: A Children's Anthem](#) with the Grade 1/2 class at Inverness Education Centre/Academy. [Change Sings: A Children's Anthem](#) is a beautiful story about a young girl who leads others on a musical journey, teaching others they have the power to change the world, their communities and themselves.



I was pleased to join students and staff from Antigonish Education Centre, Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School and St. Andrew Junior School; and partners from St. F. X. University, the Town of Antigonish and the Municipality of the County of Antigonish at the community launch of African Heritage Month on February 1, 2024.

These initiatives also align well with the SRCE System Improvement Plan goal to foster student well-being through the creation of safe, positive, inclusive and culturally responsive learning and work environments.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our employees of African Descent. The importance of having role models for our students cannot be overstated and I am pleased our students of African Descent see themselves reflected in the role models in our schools.

I firmly believe education brings equality and if we continue our collaboration and ongoing work with education partners, our efforts will bring many positive results and successes for our students.

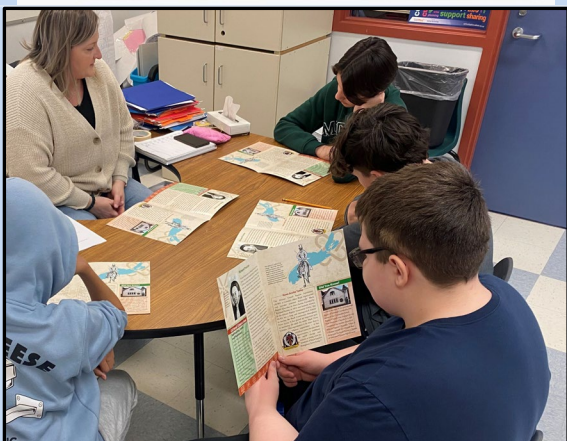
### Did You Know?

The [Afrikan Canadian Heritage and Friendship Centre](#) is located in Chedabucto Education Centre/ Guysborough Academy and officially opened in November of 2001.

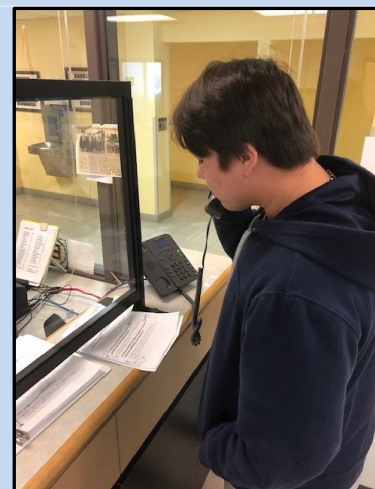


The Centre provides Afrocentric lessons and resources to schools throughout the SRCE and partners with the local and provincial African Nova Scotian community to foster cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding.





At Whycocomagh Education Centre, students have been focusing on African Heritage Month celebrations during their small group support. In this photo, they are using the Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute display boards and African Nova Scotian profiles to complete their daily guided reading.



As part of Dalbrae Academy's African Heritage Month celebrations, a fact of the day is read by students. In this photo, Donald Googoo, a Grade 9 student, reads the following fact: Even after being freed from slavery, Black people still faced discrimination. In the 1790s, around 1200 Black people left from Halifax for Sierra Leone because of discrimination and lack of opportunity.



## Congratulations Students!!

Congratulations to **Murdock MacLean, a Grade 9 student at Inverness Education Centre/Academy**, who recently applied for, and was awarded, a Public Health Agency of Canada School Health Grant in the amount of \$3,500. The Grant is intended to help build skills in teamwork and leadership as well as empower students to put their ideas into action. This youth driven project is intended to help improve healthy living in schools by incorporating health equity, accessibility, inclusivity and meets one or more of the Public Health Agency of Canada priorities:

- Reducing Substance Harm
- Healthy Eating and Nutrition
- Physical Activity
- Positive Mental Health and Well-being

After discussion with school staff, Norma MacKinnon, Youth Health Centre Coordinator for Inverness Education Centre/Academy, and the Grade 9 Citizenship class, Murdock was nominated and took a keen interest in spearheading the application process on behalf of his peers and very thoughtfully came up with and expanded upon several ideas.

The project was called **“Celebrating Our Spirit, Mind and Bodies”** and focused on the following:

- Design a Land Acknowledgement sign to put on the school grounds to help reconcile the past and make everyone feel safe and secure.
- As it can sometimes be hard to find a pencil, one of Murdock's ideas was to ensure everyone in the school was gifted with one. He thoughtfully came up with an idea to include an Indigenous engraving or design on the pencil and to tie in the artwork of one of our students who had designed a t-shirt for National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.
- New outdoor basketball nets.
- A small budget to offer healthy snacks during June assessments with different options to support cultural diversity and individual needs.



**Murdock MacLean proudly displays the award.**

I would like to thank Murdock for his leadership and thoughtfulness in pursuing this project. The ideas outlined when put into action will certainly further support students' physical health and well-being.

I would also like to **congratulate four students from Chedabucto Education Centre/Guysborough Academy on their recent success in the [Atlantic Science Links Association's](#) (ASLA) second Junior High Science Contest.**

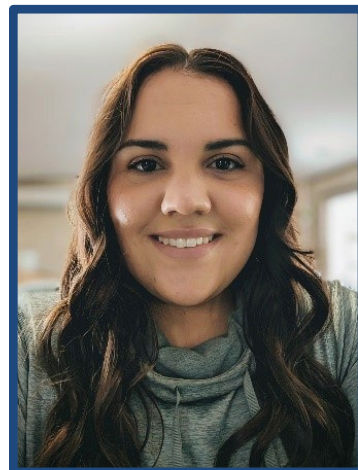
Congratulations to **Noah Godfrey (Grade 8)** who placed in the top ten scoring students at their grade level in Atlantic Science Links Association's. Noah, along with fellow students **Jordan Hendsbee (Grade 7)**, **Angus Scarisbrick (Grade 7)** and **Katie Macdonald (Grade 9)** also achieved the highest score for their grade level within the SRCE. A total of 1281 students from 20 schools across the province registered for this contest. The students along with other top-scoring students at each grade level will be acknowledged and celebrated at an awards ceremony at Dalhousie University scheduled for Saturday, May 25, 2024.

ASLA is a charitable science promotion organization which coordinates outreach programs for students in grades primary to twelve with a mission to bridge the gap between the scientific community, schools, and the public. On December 5, 2023, ASLA held its second Junior High Science Contest for students in Grades 7, 8 and 9 across the province, which challenged students to showcase their impressive scientific knowledge.

## SRCE Parent Navigator Continues to Help Families and Students Succeed

The Parent Navigator position in the SRCE has been in place since the Fall of 2018. This position was included as part of the new inclusive education supports to ensure students have the help they need to be more successful in school.

The personal and direct support to families provided by our Parent Navigator is helping them to navigate the education system and learn and understand what programs and services are available from our community partners and at school, and how to access these supports. The Parent Navigator works exclusively with parents and families in a collaborative way within the school system. As a result, the position is significantly supporting students' success in and out of the classroom. The support provided is individualized and depends on the respective family's needs. The support ranges from helping them access medical and mental health services as well as financial supports; connecting them with parenting programs; attending School Program Planning meetings and school meetings to provide attendance and behavioural support, all the while encouraging parents to be self-advocates. In addition, the Parent Navigator has organized various presentations for parents, in cooperation with community partners. Referrals to the Parent Navigator may be made through school administration, SchoolsPlus and teachers. Parents may also self-refer if they need assistance.



**SRCE SchoolsPlus Parent Navigator, [Savannah Antle](#)**, can help connect families to services and supports both in school and in our local communities. Savannah may be contacted by email at [savannah.antle@srce.ca](mailto:savannah.antle@srce.ca) or by phone at 902-631-6695.

**Antigonish Ed Centre** @AntEdCentre · Feb 1

Today at AEC we recognized #WorldHijabDay! Mrs. Wyler and grade 4 student, Balkis, taught us so much. We learned about the proper way to wear a hijab as well as the reasons behind wearing a hijab.

4 15 2.3K

**Strait Regional Centre for Education** @SRCE\_NS · Feb 23

Wow, very impressive work Grade 6!

**East Antigonish Education Centre/Academy** @EastAntECA · Feb 23

Our grade 6 French class published a book! They also did all the artwork with clay. Thanks to Mrs. Lisa McNamara for doing this activity with the class!

**Strait Regional Centre for Education** @SRCE\_NS · Feb 26

A wonderful opportunity to explore possible careers in science, engineering, trades and technology! #WomenInSTEM #SRCEStudentLearningInAction @Techsploration

**Fanning Education Centre/Canso Acad** @FanningECCans · Feb 25

Techsploration is such a wonderful program to empower and explore careers in science, engineering, trades and technology! Our grade 9 girls had so much fun visiting and learning about the Coastguard.

**Strait Regional Centre for Education** @SRCE\_NS · Feb 23

#SRCEStudentLearningInAction

**Inverness Education Centre/Academy** @InvernessECA · Feb 21

Our Chemistry 12 students were busy completing a lab on plotting solubility curves today.

**Richmond Education Centre/Academy** @Richmond\_ECA · Feb 7

Service Trades 10 was experimenting with meringue this past week - looks delicious!

**St. Andrews Consolidated School** @sacseagles · 4h

Grade 5 McDaniel using Orbit Note in ELA class!

**SAERC** @SAERC\_Official · Jan 31

Exciting day in Grade 10! Mrs. Hearn, Mrs. MacIsaac, and Mr. King organized an innovative January summative assessment with hands-on group lab rotations. Learning in action! #ScienceEd #Grade10 #HandsOnLearning

**St. Andrew Junior School** @StAndrewJunior · 7h

A beautiful day for snowshoeing! The 7-2 class enjoyed the sun and the snow ☀️❄️

**Tamarac Education Centre** @TEC\_6650 · Feb 23

Grade 1 French Immersion students are working on the "Aa" vowel sound and are completing an activity called "Ecris la salle" - combining movement, writing and reading!







# Grade 10 and 11 Students Be The Student Voice



Become a member of the SRCE  
**Regional Student Advisory Committee (RSAC)**

Are you an open-minded individual with a passion for sharing your ideas and inspiring positive change?

Make a difference and impact your school community by representing your fellow students.

**As a member of the SRCE RSAC, responsibilities include:**

- providing information and advice on topics related to student well-being, achievement and other aspects of student experiences;
- learning about school, regional and provincial initiatives;
- connecting with the Minister's Student Advisory Committee;
- meeting up to three times per year; and
- committing to membership for up to two years.

**Your Voice Can Make a Difference!  
Your Input Matters!**

For more information, please contact your school principal.

To submit an **Expression of Interest**, please complete the **SRCE RSAC Form** located on your school website, SRCE website, other social media sites or scan the QR Code:



**Deadline to submit an Expression of Interest is Friday, March 22, 2024.**



As I shared in my previous RED Reports, further to input received through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's [Ideas for Education](#) initiative, the SRCE is piloting several projects to help improve student achievement and outcomes. In this month's report, I am pleased to highlight another pilot underway in the SRCE:



### Term Substitute Teacher Initiative Pilot

The SRCE hires term substitutes who are assigned to various families of schools in the SRCE. This approach allows us to have designated individual(s) readily available to substitute in our schools.

By focusing on hard-to-fill subject areas and regions with a limited number of available substitute teachers, we directly support where the need is greatest.

This strategy supports our overall goal of fostering a consistent learning environment for our students when there are teacher absences.

### Youth Pathways Programs Update

Students in the Strait Regional Centre for Education may explore multiple career pathways by taking part in a variety of dynamic hands-on, technical and community-based learning programs such as:

- Co-operative Education;
- Options and Opportunities;
- Skilled Trades;
- Technology Education; and
- any of the programs sponsored by the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.

Selecting from this menu of experiential learning choices helps students identify areas of interest and enables them to make more informed decisions about their future plans. This may include attending university or college, or taking an apprenticeship route. For more detailed information, please access the [Youth Pathways Programs and Courses in the Strait Regional Centre For Education: A Quick Reference Guide](#).

I am pleased to include some photos of the many varied experiences and learning opportunities available to students in the SRCE.



St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy students, Gabe Bingley and Zach Belair, building hotel units in their Construction Trades 11 class this fall, under the guidance of teacher Dan Arpin.



Pictured above are two SAERC students getting prepared for the Nova Scotia Robotics Skills Competition coming up this April.



Student interviews for placement in the competitive Summer Sector Programs (Building Futures for Youth, TestDrive and Serve It Up) are taking place in the coming weeks. These programs provide students with six (6) days of safety training at NSCC in May along with a paid 200-hour summer Co-op placement where students can earn three (3) Co-op credits while the hours accrued working under the journeyman can count towards an apprenticeship.

Pictured at left is Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School student, Casey King, who was one of our many successful students who participated in the Building Futures for Youth program last summer.





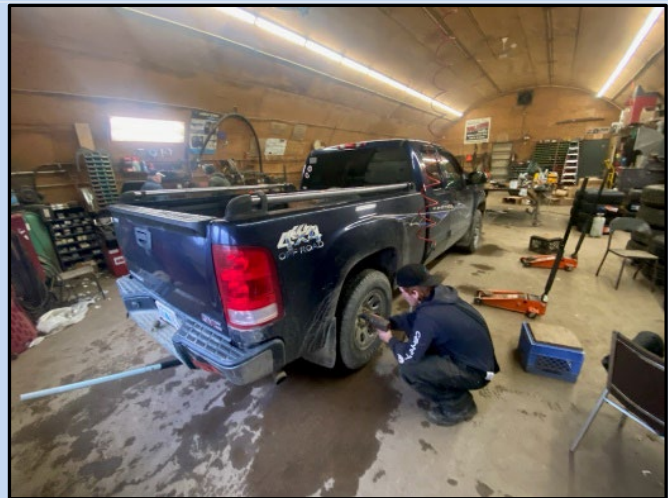
Students in Grades 6 to 12 with an entrepreneurial spirit can submit their business ideas for consideration of the [Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence](#). The deadline for application is March 1, 2024. Interested students may contact their school counsellors for further information. Last year's winners at the event hosted in May at St. Mary's University included Divjot Kalsi (pictured above), a current Grade 10 student at Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School.



The Community-Based Learning class at Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School recently visited with residents of the Maples Seniors Complex. A wonderful opportunity for students to connect, engage and demonstrate what it means to be an active citizen within the broader community.



SAERC Options and Opportunities class on a field trip to Martin Marietta Porcupine Mountain Quarry in Mulgrave.



Dalbrae Academy Co-operative Education student, Kenzie Batherson, changing tires at Triple R Welding.



Dalbrae Academy Career Development 10 class constructing excavators from the Try-A-Trade Program.



Grade 10 Options and Opportunities students at Inverness Education Centre/Academy completed their First Aid training. An important skill to have as they venture into the workforce.



SAERC students attended the NSCC Open House at Strait Campus in the Fall.



SAERC Co-operative Education students on their work terms.





Winter has arrived. This is the time of year for parents and guardians to review their backup plan with their children in the event there are decisions made to delay or cancel bus service or classes due to weather and/or road conditions.

**Please make sure your current contact information (email address and cell phone) is on file at your student's school.**

Our preference is always to have our students in school. We recognize that parents and guardians are concerned when their children miss class time, and we share this concern. That is why our decision to cancel classes is not made lightly and is made with the safety of students and staff as the first priority.

The vast majority of our students are bused to school and our region covers a very large geographic area of 11,000 sq. km. Due to our large geographic region, it is very important that we gather information from many sources beginning very early in the morning, around 5:00 a.m., to enable us to make an informed decision and announce it prior to 6:30 a.m., to the degree possible, to help families plan accordingly.



### The Decision-Making Process

The Strait Regional Centre for Education follows a comprehensive decision-making process and detailed procedures to make decisions resulting in delays or cancellations to bus service or classes in school(s). Our decision-making process includes consultations with, and a review of information from, the following:

- The SRCE Manager of Transportation and Director of Operations;
- Staff who personally travel on the roads early in the morning evaluating road and weather conditions;
- Weather forecasting services including Environment Canada, WOOD Weather Information System, and The Weather Network;
- Local region contacts (school bus drivers);
- Neighbouring Regional Centres for Education;
- Provincial highway cameras;
- The Nova Scotia Department of Public Works; and
- RCMP, if required.

There are six possible phases of cancellations:

Phase I: Cancellation of a Bus Run or Runs

Phase II: Cancellation of Bus Service on Unpaved Roads

Phase III: Cancellation of Classes due to Inclement Weather

Phase IV: Delayed Opening of Schools

Phase V: Early Dismissal: Predicted and Deteriorating Weather/Road Conditions During the Day

Phase VI: Partial or Complete System Shutdown/Schools and Buildings Closed

### How to Stay Informed

You are encouraged to check all available information sources as noted below to ensure you are up to date regarding class and bus service announcements:

- Check our website, [www.srce.ca](http://www.srce.ca) and specifically the [Cancellations and Announcements](#) image on the main page of the website. Please note there are two tabs on this page, School and Worksite Cancellations and Announcements are found under the first tab at the bottom of the page and Bus Route Cancellations and Announcements are found under the second tab.
- Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) at [@SRCE\\_NS](#).
- Listen to local radio stations.
- Subscribe to receive class cancellation and/or bus route notices via email and/or text at [https://www.srce.ca/news/stay\\_informed](https://www.srce.ca/news/stay_informed).

### Contact Information

- Transportation Department Staff: 902-747-3645; 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. / [transportation@srce.ca](mailto:transportation@srce.ca)
- Operations Centre Dispatch Staff: 902-747-3642; 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Emergency Busing Phone Number: 902-747-3642; 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### Did You Know?

- ✓ SRCE Transportation staff may be contacted by email at [transportation@srce.ca](mailto:transportation@srce.ca) or by phone at 902-747-3645.
- ✓ The school bus emergency phone number is 902-747-3642 (6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

Nova Scotia HomeworkHUB

APPU/auxdevoirs Nouvelle-Écosse

### NEED HELP WITH A MATH QUESTION?

- GNSPES Access**  
Click the Nova Scotia Homework Hub icon
- Available 24/7**  
• textbooks  
• videos  
• practice questions  
• vocabulary review
- Bilingual Tutors**  
**Tutors for Grade 7 - 12**  
Sunday through Thursday  
5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

1-888-444-6607 Nova Scotia HomeworkHUB

APPU/auxdevoirs Nouvelle-Écosse

[gnspe.ca](http://gnspe.ca)

Nova Scotia HomeworkHUB

APPU/auxdevoirs Nouvelle-Écosse

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- GNSPES Access**  
Click the Nova Scotia Homework Hub icon
- Available 24/7**  
• textbooks  
• videos  
• practice questions  
• vocabulary review
- Bilingual Tutors**  
**Tutors for Grade 4 - 6**  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday  
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

1-888-444-6607 Nova Scotia HomeworkHUB

APPU/auxdevoirs Nouvelle-Écosse

[gnspe.ca](http://gnspe.ca)

### Invitation to Become a Host Family in the SRCE

### BRING THE WORLD HOME

When you host an international student you may be surprised at how your family will grow

Visit [nsisp.ca/become-host-family](http://nsisp.ca/become-host-family) for more information on how to become an NSISP host family

Nova Scotia International Student Program

The SRCE continues to recruit families to host international students.

Welcome the world into your home by hosting an international student. Become a host family and create friends for life.

You will be surprised at the many ways your family grows when you become a host family.

Your hospitality can make all the difference to a student's experience, and it is our hope that by becoming a host family, it will mark the beginning of a relationship that will last a lifetime!

Learn more about this exciting opportunity at <https://nsisp.ca/become-host-family>.

For more information about becoming a host family in the SRCE, please contact:

Chris Penny, Manager, SRCE-ISP  
[chris.penny@srce.ca](mailto:chris.penny@srce.ca); 902-631-5170

### Who Do I Contact with Questions or Concerns?



**Strait**  
Regional Centre for Education

- 1** For curriculum or classroom-related questions, start with your child's teacher. If required, follow up with the school principal.
- 2** For questions about the Pre-primary Program, start with your child's Lead Early Childhood Educator. If required, follow up with the Manager of Pre-primary Programs at [carolyn.webber@srce.ca](mailto:carolyn.webber@srce.ca).
- 3** For general inquiries, please contact the SRCE where we will be happy to connect you with the right member of staff: 902-625-2191 / [srce@srce.ca](mailto:srce@srce.ca).
- 4** For all other matters and media inquiries, please contact Deanna Gillis, Coordinator of Communications by phone at 902-625-7093 or by email at [deanna.gillis@srce.ca](mailto:deanna.gillis@srce.ca).

