# Regional Executive Director's Report

to School Communities in the Strait Region

It is hard to believe that we are already a little over a third of the way through the school year. Classroom and school routines are well-established, and students and staff have re-established relationships and connections with families.

Through my monthly reports, I am pleased to share information and photographs on the many initiatives and activities led by our school-based and regional staff that are supporting and improving our students' well-being, achievement and overall success.

The first set of report cards were recently issued with parent-teacher meetings held at all schools in the SRCE. A strong home and school connection is very important to our students' success. I encourage families to reach out to their child's teacher and/or school administration at any time for support.

At this time of year, we are also very proud of our students and staff and the many charitable causes and initiatives they undertake to help families in our local communities who need additional support. They are demonstrating first-hand the importance of service learning, caring and compassion in many meaningful ways that will make a significant difference in the lives of many.

I want families to know we are here to support you. I encourage anyone who needs support to reach out to school staff who can provide assistance and/or connect you with the right help. As a reminder, all students and families have access to programs, services and supports provided by our SchoolsPlus staff. For contact information, please access the <a href="SchoolsPlus page">SchoolsPlus page</a> on the SRCE website. In particular, the SRCE SchoolsPlus Parent Navigator, <a href="Savannah Antle">Savannah Antle</a>, can help connect families to services and supports both in school and in our local communities. Savannah may be contacted by email at <a href="Savannah.antle@srce.ca">Savannah.antle@srce.ca</a> or by phone at 902-631-6695.

As our minds turn to the upcoming Holiday Break, our last day of classes is Wednesday, December 20, 2023, and classes resume on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

I wish everyone a safe, happy and healthy Holiday and all the best in 2024!

Sincerely,

Paul Landry
Regional Executive Director of Education

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













Strait Regional Centre for Education 304 Pitt Street, Unit 2
Port Hawkesbury, NS B9A 2T9; www.srce.ca; srce@srce.ca; (902) 625-2191/
1-800-650-4448 (P) (902) 625-2281 (F)





#### November/December 2023



Paul Landry
Regional Executive Director
of Education

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### **Upcoming Dates/Events**

**Wednesday, December 20, 2023** Last Day of Classes Prior to Holiday Break

Tuesday, January 2, 2024 Classes Resume

#### Transportation (Busing) Inquiries

For questions related to busing, bus stops and/or bus routes, please contact SRCE Transportation by email at <a href="mailto:transportation@srce.ca">transportation@srce.ca</a> 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.)

# More School Input for Families, Students, Advisory Councils

On Friday, December 1, 2023, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development Becky Druhan announced Nova Scotia is increasing transparency in the public school system and strengthening the voices of local families, students, and School Advisory Councils (SACs). A letter from Minister Druhan was sent to families and staff by email outlining the additional details.

Over the next year, school communities will see changes empowering local voices, including an enhanced role for SACs in supporting schools, RCEs and CSAP. This will include:

An enhanced role for SACs in supporting schools and RCEs/CSAP, through:

- A new Innovation Fund that provides grants up to \$10,000 to a school SAC to support student well-being and achievement; SACs must apply for individual grants;
- An annual conference for all SAC Chairs to provide policy input and discuss common school challenges and opportunities;
- More opportunities for input into how school funds are distributed in schools, including the Healthy Schools Grant; and
- Additional parent/guardian and community representation.

Enhanced transparency and engagement with school regions and leaders by having:

- Regional Executive Directors lead public engagement sessions with parents and guardians of school-aged children and regional leaders, three times a year, to discuss student achievement well-being, and capital planning, etc.; and
- Improved Parent Navigation in all RCEs and the CSAP to ensure families get questions answered in a timely manner.

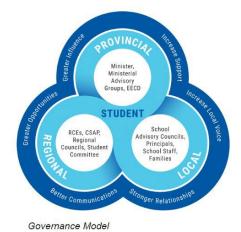
Enhanced voices in the education system by creating:

- A regional student advisory committee that reports directly to their Regional Executive
  Directors/Superintendent on topics such as achievement and well-being and other aspects of student
  experiences, especially as it relates to the Student Success Survey; and
- A regional advisory table that reflects the diversity of the region, made primarily of SAC members, to advise Regional Executive Directors.

For more information, please access the news release at the link <u>More School Input for Families, Students, Advisory Councils</u> and the <u>Strengthening Local Voices in Education</u> website. You may also access a summary report at the following link: <u>Increasing Local Voice in Education Policy & Decision-Making.</u>

I look forward to continuing to work together to support student well-being, achievement and success as these changes are implemented in the education system in the SRCE.

#### Governance Model



EECD has used this feedback to develop a governance model that will enhance local voice in education policy and decisionmaking.



Governance Breakdown

# Upcoming School Advisory Council (SAC) Professional Development Sessions

The SRCE has scheduled the following two professional development sessions for School Advisory Council chairpersons:

- Wednesday, January 17, 2024 (virtual), 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 23, 2024 (in-person), 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Please note these dates in your calendars. More information will be shared in the new year.

I would like to acknowledge the work and commitment of the members of our SACs who generously share their time and talents to support students' well-being, achievement and success. Your support is appreciated and valued.

# **Ideas for Education Pilot Projects**

As I shared in my October RED Report, as part of input received through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's <u>Ideas for Education</u> initiative, the SRCE is piloting several projects to help improve student achievement and outcomes. In this month's report, I am pleased to highlight two of the pilots underway in the SRCE:

# Junior High School Support Group - GuysWork Program Expansion

As part of an approved research project, and in partnership with Bridges Institute and St. Francis Xavier University, four schools in the SRCE are taking part in an expanded healthy living program called *GuysWork*. The program is led by school counsellors and trained school staff and offered on a voluntary basis to students, with parent/guardian consent, who identify as boy and/or male in Grade 6 to 8. The participating schools include Richmond Education Centre/Academy, St. Andrew Junior School, Tamarac Education Centre and St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy.

The program will run for three years and involves eight to ten, 45- to 60-minute lessons each school year. The program will include topics aligned with Nova Scotia's Healthy Living curriculum outcomes including Friendships, Identity, Emotions, Help-Seeking, Sexual Health, Substances, Resiliency and Consent. The overarching goal of the program is to help students develop healthy behaviours and relationships and promote healthy masculinity among students.

### **Home Learning Support Teacher**

Effective this school year, the SRCE is piloting a new full-time regional position of Home Learning Support Teacher whose role is dedicated to providing extra support for a group of students with complex needs by assisting with flexible teaching and learning options.

The Home Learning Support Teacher supports families and students who have significant medical and/or other concerns that have made it difficult for students to attend regular school on a full-time basis. Students are referred by school administration to Student Services staff who review the case specifics and determine the best approach to supporting the student's continued learning. The support may be provided virtually, in person or through a hybrid model.

The Home Learning Support Teacher bridges the gap between students and their respective school. The Home Learning Support Teacher will meet with the student's school administration and applicable school staff to determine education and course priorities for the student. Together, they strive to build on the student's strengths and interests to help them achieve academic success and successfully move on to the next steps in their education.

# Department of Agriculture Launches Fresh Food Cart Pilot Project at Eight (8) SRCE Schools

On Tuesday, November 21, 2023, I had the pleasure of joining Agriculture Minister Greg Morrow as he announced the launch of the <u>provincial Fresh Food Cart pilot project at eight (8) schools in our region</u>. The SRCE recognizes the importance of students having access to healthy nutritious food at school to support their learning, development and overall success.

The Fresh Food Cart pilot is offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays to all students. The cost is \$4 per meal. On these days, the menu includes Taco Tuesdays, spaghetti and loaded baked potatoes with chili (alternating on Thursdays bi-weekly) where students can choose from a variety of fruits and vegetables to add to their meal. Depending on the school, parents/guardians may submit an online order and orders can be taken in the morning as well at all eight schools.

We have received very positive feedback from all participating schools. Students are enjoying trying new foods and are looking forward to food cart days. I would like to thank all partners, staff, volunteers and cafeteria food service provider for their help in bringing this project to a reality for our students.





Students participating in *GuysWork* underway at Richmond Education Centre/Academy pose for a photo following one of their lessons.



A student supported by the Homebound Learning Support Teacher proudly displays her beautifully decorated cake. The student's creativity and interest in baking were a perfect match for a cake decorating lesson which addressed curriculum outcomes in both Art and Foods.



East Antigonish Education Centre/Academy students Lilly Greencorn and Laura Snow enjoyed the Fresh Food Cart while speaking with Paul Landry, Agriculture Minister Greg Morrow and Health Minister Michelle Thompson (left to right) following the provincial announcement.

# Student Learning in Action in the SRCE

I am pleased to continue to share some excellent examples of the impressive student learning happening throughout the region to foster student well-being, achievement and success through the creation of positive, safe, inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. I would like to recognize the amazing efforts of our teachers and support staff for the many innovative and creative strategies they are using to engage and support student learning and well-being.



# How is SRCE Supporting Literacy Learning and Teaching This Year?

One of the goals in the 2023-2024 <u>SRCE System Improvement Plan</u> and <u>Educational Business Plan</u> is to improve student achievement in literacy. The following information highlights a number of initiatives underway to help achieve this goal:

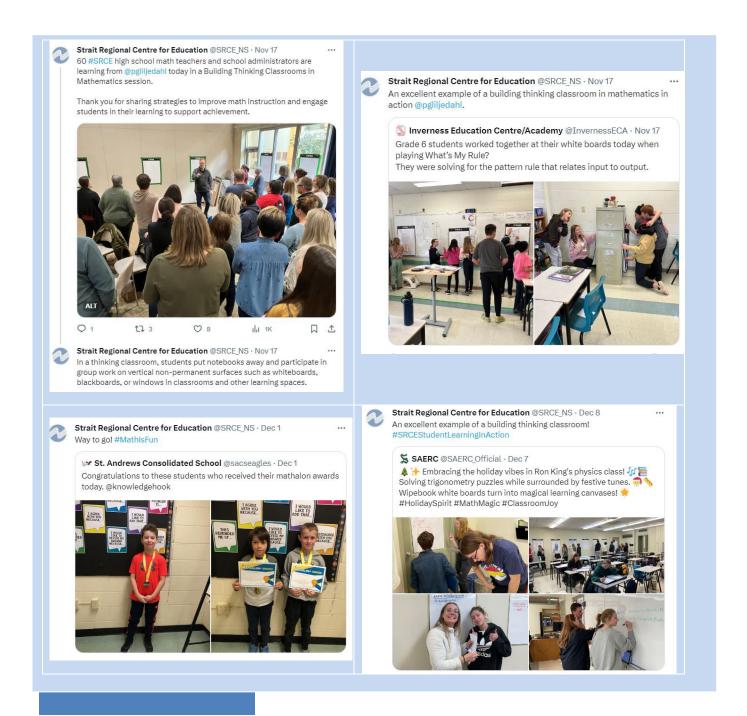
- Grades Primary to 2 teachers are implementing a systematic phonics program as part of their Literacy teaching with great success.
- Grade 3 teachers took part in a full-day professional learning session focused on Oral Language development and a Writer's Workshop to review best practices for incorporating various writing strategies across curriculum areas.
- Grades Primary to 8 Learning Support and Classroom Teachers attended a virtual professional development literacy session focused on how to do systematic phonics lessons for whole classes at the Grade Primary to 2 level and in small groups at the Grade 3 level and up.
- All schools created Literacy Data Walls used to monitor student growth and achievement.
- Elementary Literacy Boost Teachers are offering a 40-day literacy boost to our 14 elementary schools over the next few months to help students meet benchmarks in both reading and writing.
- High school teachers took part in a virtual professional development session facilitated by Educational Consultant
  and author of <u>The Joyful Teacher</u> and <u>No More Fake Reading</u>, Berit Gordon, focused on strategies for fostering a
  love of reading among students.
- The Grade 5/6 SRCE lead team attended Treaty Education professional development where they were introduced
  to a new book called <u>The Honour Song</u> written by George Paul and Loretta Gould. This book will arrive in all
  Grade 5/6 classrooms in the Spring.
- During the last several years, additional resources, including culturally responsive book collections, that reflect the diversity, interest and reading levels of students have been added to classrooms at all grade levels.
- A provincial website was created for, and shared with, all Grades 7-12 Literacy teachers on Effective Literacy Practices.
- All new teachers in the SRCE took part in an orientation session which included professional learning on Active Smarter Kids (ASK). ASK is a model for curriculum delivery that involves the incorporation of simple physical activities into the delivery of daily lessons and across subject areas. Research demonstrates movement improves memory tasks, enhances student engagement and improves student achievement.
- Although literacy is celebrated throughout the school year, January marks Literacy Month in the SRCE. Watch for
  more information on how schools will be celebrating and promoting a love of literacy in schools.



# How is SRCE Supporting Mathematics Learning and Teaching This Year?

One of the goals in the 2023-2024 <u>SRCE System Improvement Plan</u> and <u>Educational Business Plan</u> is to improve student achievement in mathematics. The following information highlights a number of initiatives underway to help achieve this goal:

- High school math teachers participated in a professional learning session facilitated by Peter Liljedahl, Educational
  Consultant and Professor, Simon Fraser University that focused on strategies for *Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics* including how to engage students in problem solving. Teacher pedagogy was modelled during the
  workshop and participants had the opportunity to experience a 'thinking classroom' model.
- Grades Primary to 8 Principals attended a professional learning Leading Schoolwide Improvement in Math (The Knowledgehook Leadership Series) session. Principals and Programs Staff took part in a professional learning session focused on student achievement in math. Participants discussed the importance of having a clear understanding of how students are doing in mathematics.
- Regional Programs and Student Services staff are collaborating on professional learning sessions for all Grade 5 teachers across the region throughout the year. This site-based professional development is held as small group sessions and will help teachers plan their 90-minute balanced math program for 30 minutes of mental math, retrieval practice and number routines and 60 minutes of instructional practice. Teachers will also have an opportunity to explore new resources for building fact fluency.
- SRCE Math Hybrid Teachers are taking part in monthly professional learning sessions to support high impact teaching strategies. In each session, the focus is on building fact fluency through a student-focused coaching model.
- Grade 3 teachers took part in a full-day professional learning session which included a session on using games (learning through play) to reinforce fact learning.
- All schools are collecting mathematics data for their school data walls.



# Information on Class and/or Bus Service Delays and/or Cancellations Due to Weather and/or Road Conditions

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

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

school.

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, <u>www.srce.ca</u> and specifically the <u>Cancellations and Announcements</u> 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 twitter.com/SRCE\_NS.
- Listen to local radio stations.
- Subscribe to receive class cancellation and/or bus route notices via email and/or text at <a href="https://www.srce.ca/news/stay\_informed">https://www.srce.ca/news/stay\_informed</a>.

### **Contact Information**

- Transportation Department Staff: 902-747-3645; 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. / 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 <u>transportation@srce.ca</u> 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.).

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### Join the SRCE Team

I invite you to join our team and support the success of our children and youth in the SRCE. There are currently full-time and casual employment opportunities available in teaching and non-teaching positions.

In addition, we are accepting Expressions of Interest for potential early hire term teaching contracts for the 2024-2025 academic year. Qualified teachers, or those who will be qualified by September 1, 2023, are invited to apply online in the following fields:

- Mathematics;
- Science;
- <u>French</u>; and
- Equity.



# Joint Accessibility Plan

Nova Scotia's seven Regional Centres for Education (RCEs) and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) developed a multi-year plan to ensure accessibility in public education. The Regional Executive Directors and Superintendent, along with invaluable contributions from our many partners and staff, created a Joint Accessibility Plan. This plan outlines our commitment to provide accessible learning and teaching experiences for all, in every aspect of education. Please access a copy of the Plan at the following link: Joint Accessibility Plan.

All students and staff should feel that they belong in an inclusive school – accepted, safe, and valued. This plan, in alignment with Nova Scotia's Inclusive Education Policy, will act as our guide as we deliver on our commitment to creating accessible education in Nova Scotia by 2030. This collective work will continue as we move from drafting this plan to implementing change.







## Invitation to Become a Host Family in the SRCE



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 <a href="https://nsisp.ca/become-host-family">https://nsisp.ca/become-host-family</a>.

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

Chris Penny, Manager, SRCE-ISP <a href="mailto:chris.penny@srce.ca">chris.penny@srce.ca</a>; 902-631-5170