

Leslie Thomas Junior High



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School and Community Context

Leslie Thomas Junior High (LTJH) has served the Lower Sackville community since 1975. In 2010-11, we offered programming to 325 students from Grades 7-9. Over the past number of years our school has experienced a slow decline in enrollment. We have English, early French Immersion and late French Immersion programs and the class sizes vary across these programs. In September 2008, we welcomed the new early Immersion program to LTJH for the first time and that lead class has now moved on to Sackville High School for the 2011-12 school year. Our students also have the opportunity to participate in instrumental music from Grade 7 to Grade 9 and become involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities including sports teams such as, ice hockey, volleyball, basketball, indoor lacrosse, softball, badminton, indoor field hockey and soccer. Students also have the

chance to participate in clubs such as the gay-straight alliance, green team, yearbook, math olympiad, and leadership. Our students have many opportunities to explore different areas of interest and participate in different activities. This gives the students a chance to expand their horizons and try something new. Everyone at LTJH, including teachers, staff, parents, students and the School Advisory Council work together to ensure a positive and welcoming school environment. Our teachers are well equipped and strive to help our students meet their needs and achieve their goals. All members of our school community are dedicated to meeting the needs of all our learners by building positive relationships.



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Family and Community Involvement

LTJH strives to build on positive home and school communication and involvement. In our latest survey, 96% of parents felt informed and knew how well their children were doing in school. Over 97% of parents/guardians surveyed felt welcomed, appreciated and informed at LTJH. Our survey results also showed that over 97% of parents/guardians are satisfied with LTJH's efforts to meet their child's academic needs with 96% of parents/guardians also feeling LTJH is a safe place.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Our latest 'Getting to Great' survey results showed that 90% of our students felt that their teachers really care about them. In turn, 95% of our students responded that they treat their teachers with respect. We believe that students feel comfortable and safe because of this mutual respect and of the many programs we offer that promote positive behaviour. We have monthly Positive Effective Behaviour Supports (PEBS)

assemblies, guest speakers, a gay-straight alliance, leadership club, Fantastic Friday phone calls, LTJH 'gotchas' - to name a few. Our teachers are effective at classroom management, therefore, any student discipline issues sent to the office represented only 2% of the overall student population at LTJH. Survey results indicated that 100% of teachers ensure that families and community members feel welcomed at LTJH.

Provincial and Board Assessment Results

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 results below indicate the percentage of students who met expectations on the assessments. Also note that all percentages used throughout this report are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Literacy Assessments	School (%)		Board (%)
	Baseline	2010-11	2010-11
Grade 8 Board			
FI Writing-Ideas	82%	47%	73%
FI Writing-Organization/Correctness	82%	76%	79%
Reading	95%	87%	85%
Writing-Ideas	61%	81%	74%
Writing-Organization/Correctness	65%	74%	76%
Grade 9 Provincial			
Reading	86%	77%	79%
Writing	97%	88%	91%
Math Assessments	School (%)		Board (%)
	Baseline	2010-11	2010-11
Grade 8 Board			
Communicating Math Thinking	19%	45%	52%
Mathematics Concepts	85%	73%	75%
Problem Solving	30%	51%	53%

As mentioned, the assessment table above is generated by the HRSB and indicates the baseline data from 2008-09 and the latest results with the percentage of students meeting expectations on Grade 8 Mathematics and Reading. As you can see we have made great strides in some areas since 2008-09 and need to address some areas of concerns for improvement. These percentages represent an average of the component scores (i.e. Literary text, Informational text, Media text, Conventions, etc.) for each student who scored in the competent or proficient range for reading, and an average of the component scores (i.e. Number Sense, Measurement & Geometry, Patterns/Algebra, etc.) for each student who scored in the competent or proficient range for mathematics. It is important to note that the component scores for Computation and Estimation and Vocabulary are not included in this overall percentage, of which LTJH was on par with board wide results. Nonetheless, we are confident that the goals we set on page 4 of this report will address the overall learning needs of our students in the immediate years to follow.

Classroom Assessment

Through daily classroom observations, other class assessments, program support and professional conversations, teachers developed a clear picture of students' strengths and needs and how to best improve individual and overall student achievement.

Teachers use their time in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to look at our students' academic results and growth; as well as to reflect on their own teaching practices. PLC teachers discuss areas of strength and areas requiring additional instruction. In the past there have been common assessments in both English and mathematics between the classes and grade levels which helped students achieve common outcomes and helped teachers provide continued, consistent support for their students.

In literacy, in the past, classroom results from Grade 7 to 9 indicated that our students improved in their overall reading and writing ability with a focus on reading comprehension and supporting personal responses. Continuously, students are assessed to see if they choose a 'just right' novel verified through informal, one-to-one reading conferences and workshops.

In math, over the years, our overall Grade 7 to 9 classroom trends have shown improvement was needed in certain strands such as geometry, spatial sense and measurement. In the past, teachers looked at such topics as students' ability to use models, pictures, symbols, and words when solving math problems. The results revealed that most students were able to understand the math questions asked, however they needed more instruction using pictures, numbers, symbols and words to explain their thinking – this was a common trend in other junior high schools as well.

In order to accommodate the many different learning styles at LTJH, teachers provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and attitudes in a variety of ways. At LTJH an encompassing goal is to achieve a balanced assessment of student learning by using a variety of strategies in math and literacy. Teachers continue to work in PLC's to review student assessments to understand how to assist our students in moving forward in their learning. This practice helps inform teachers in their classroom instruction according to the needs of our students. By identifying areas of development, teachers are better able to understand and meet student academic needs. During the 2010-11 PLC's information was shared that informed and help direct teachers' future instruction and focal points for the 2011-12 school year. It is our aim to close the achievement gap by examining and supporting all students' academic growth and their opportunities for success.



Student Engagement

At LTJH many students are engaged and highly motivated. Our 'Getting to Great' surveys over the years show that - 90% percent are involved in sports or clubs at sometime during the year. 95% of students admit they try their best because they want good grades and 92% of students also believe their teachers expect them to do their best. 94% of students feel that teachers show them how to do work in other ways, and 97% of students revealed that teachers wanted them to understand the class information, instead of memorizing it. Overall, 92% of students felt like they belonged. We are extremely proud of these results; learning happens when students are engaged!

Time to Learn

LTJH follows the 'Time to Learn' requirements set by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Each course has a required and recommended number of minutes. Each class on average has one hour a day for both math and English or French language arts. Surveys indicated that both staff and students felt that LTJH provided a very positive classroom learning environment with minimal disruptions. Classroom phones allow more effective communication and further minimize PA announcements during instructional time. LTJH will continue to use Positive Effective Behavioural Support (PEBS) as a way of encouraging positive student behaviour and time on task.

Professional Development

Our teachers are actively engaged in professional development on a regular basis. LTJH staff continued with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to provide support for students by analysing student assessment data and being reflective of best teaching practices. Staff team with colleagues, who teach a common curriculum, to provide consistent program delivery and evaluation. There are school wide common assessments in all three grade levels in both math and ELA/FLA. Teachers establish common assessment rubrics across all grades and curriculum. We allot time in our schedule for math teacher mentoring, as well as, supporting students in their understanding of math concepts. For 2011-12, our teaching staff will develop proposals to access HRSB math and literacy support based on our school wide PFI goals.

Additional School Supports

At LTJH, we have a number of additional school supports to improve student achievement. These supports help classroom teachers meet the needs of our students on a regular basis. The following resources are a vital part of our LTJH community:

- guidance counsellor
- resource teacher
- Learning Centre teacher
- student support teacher (50%)
- library specialist
- educational program assistants
- secretary
- HRSB English as a Second Language teacher
- HRSB severe learning disabilities teacher
- HRSB psychologist
- HRSB behaviour specialist
- SAC
- access to HRSB literacy and math support



Planning for Improvement

As our school motto states - 'Our Pride is Our Strength!' We have much to be proud of at Leslie Thomas Junior High School. In 2010, LTJH achieved full accreditation status with the Nova Scotia Department of Education - which signifies that LTJH is an improving school as we met our academic goals set over five years. We believe the main reason for our continued success is that we always look for ways to improve and continue to achieve new goals. To that end, we will start once again in 2011 from square one and begin to address a new set of achievement goals. In 2010-11 we looked at student data and identified areas where our students are doing well and areas we need further attention and improvement. Our school staff have developed goals in the areas of literacy and mathematics. In mathematics,

the focus in the past has been on measurement, algebraic operations and number concepts which have all shown significant improvement since the initial phase of school improvement. In literacy, over the years, the support has been more expansive in application and impressively, the number of students needing assistance with literacy support plans decreased over the years. Our 2011 goals will reflect the needs based on our baseline student results, some of which are included on page 2 of this report. As LTJH heads into year two of the HRSB's Planning For Improvement (PFI) process, we are confident that the goals we set below will fully address the overall learning needs of our students.

School Goals

Goals are based on a full year analysis by staff who identified the areas of concerns to improve student achievement.

Math: Students will demonstrate improvement in the area of operations (Computation & Estimation).

- Math teachers will implement best instructional practice to improve student learning in the area of operations - computation and estimation. Teachers will actively engage students through the use of mental math strategies, three part lesson plans, effective questioning strategies, differentiation strategies, use of multiple representations and problem solving.
- Math teachers will align their mental math documents and strategies with curriculum outcomes and embed mental math strategies within course content.
- Math teachers will use curriculum documents to create a progression map of operation outcomes across appropriate grade levels and use this to inform

instruction and assessment.

- Teachers will actively engage students in learning and self reflections by modeling and implementing think-alouds, anticipation guides, think-pair-share, learning logs (portfolio), conferencing, descriptive feedback, etc.
 - Teachers will implement best assessment practices to improve student learning and implement the common assessment process through PLCs: developing and implementing common classroom assessments and criteria, analyzing and using the data to inform practice and provide meaningful feedback to students.
 - Content area teachers will provide opportunities to incorporate basic math skills as appropriate.
- Literacy: Students will demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension/making meaning in a variety of texts, across all content areas.
- ELA/FLA teachers will actively engage students daily in the Workshop model approach

through the use of effective learning strategies.

- Teachers will actively engage students in making meaning of text through the use of learning strategies such as text features, making connections, inferring and synthesizing strategies as appropriate.
- Teachers will actively engage students in learning and self reflections about their learning by modeling and implementing think-alouds, double-entry diaries, think-pair-share, Peer Learning Time, learning logs, anticipation guides, conferencing, descriptive feedback, etc.
- Teachers will implement best assessment practices to improve student learning and will implement the common assessment process through PLCs: developing and implementing common classroom assessments and criteria, analyzing and using the data to inform practice and provide meaningful feedback to students.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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