

PROGRAMS AND STUDENT SERVICES

Updates on Education, Innovation, Programs and Services

A Monthly E-Newsletter

JANUARY 2018
ISSUE 3
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Supporting Excellence in Teaching and Student Achievement

Regional Programs and Student Services Staff have developed three strategic frameworks to support teachers in their instructional practice in literacy, culturally responsive pedagogy and promoting safe, positive and inclusive learning environments.

SRSB Literacy Strategy — Priorities:

- Provide ongoing reinforcement and support for classroom teachers and administration in balanced literacy instruction.
- Ensure there is a focus on literacy development for all students throughout the Strait Regional School Board.
- Identify, advocate and provide for anchor multimedia resources for teachers and students to support literacy development.
- Increase the number of students making accelerated progress in Reading Recovery.

Focus this month: Grade P-6 Teachers will be invited by their Principals to complete a survey at their schools to identify their professional learning needs related to balanced literacy instruction. Support for your self-identified professional learning needs will be designed as a result of these surveys. Deadline to respond to the survey is Monday, January 29, 2018.

SRSB Mental Health Strategy — Priorities:

- **Promote** the skills, attitudes, knowledge and habits that develop and nurture positive mental health.
- Provide **preventative** initiatives and services designed to build skills and reduce risk factors in students.
- Facilitate **interventions** that support students to, from and through mental health care.

Focus this month: Selected staff from all schools will be invited to participate in Promoting Alternate Thinking Strategies (PATHS) training, Go-To training and professional development to implement the mental health component of Healthy Living 9.

Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP) Strategy— Priorities:

- Promote cultural awareness and equity through leadership, curriculum, learning resources and direct teaching.
- Support the implementation of culturally responsive practices through professional learning opportunities for teachers.
- Recruit to attract new members to the teaching profession, including Acadian, African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq teachers.
- Continue to develop and enhance community partnerships to promote culturally responsive practices.

Focus this month: Continue with professional development for CRP Lead Team to support implementation of culturally responsive practices throughout the Strait Regional School Board.

Initiatives associated with each of these Strategies will be featured in each Programs and Student Services Monthly E-Newsletter. For further information, please contact your School Administrator or Programs and Student Services Staff.

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Strengthening Inclusive School Environments

Congratulations to Jami Lawlor-MacInnis, Beth MacDonald, Joan Conrad and students from Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School and SAERC for introducing Unified Sports® to the Strait Regional School Board, a program sponsored and supported by Special Olympics. The first inter-school basketball game hosted by Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School in December had such a positive impact on students, staff and families that future events between the two schools are being planned.

Unified Sports® is about possibilities, and providing an opportunity for students with diverse abilities to experience physical activity and team sport in a vibrant safe activity space; a place where they are free to try, free to risk, and free to participate on their own terms. A place where being included as part of a team and making new friends is possible when given the opportunity. Unified Sports® is about celebrating and valuing diversity through sport within the school community.

Unified Sports® was introduced to all Physical Education Teachers in the 2017-18 school year by Tom Fahie from Special Olympics. Promotional videos from other schools in Nova Scotia prompted Jami and Beth to launch something similar in their schools. With support from the Strait Regional School Board, organizational meetings were held with representatives from Special Olympics, where start-up information was shared and school jerseys were provided.

School Administration and other staff members helped promote the initiative within their school communities and Special Olympics provided presentations to interested students, who enthusiastically committed. Beth recalled that "after showing students the video from Play Unified, our students were hooked."

Both programs evolved into student partners leading the practices. In addition to the lunchtime practices and the interschool play, new relationships and increased social inclusion are the biggest benefit. "Watching the leadership skills and relationships develop within the group is truly amazing," notes Jami, a group that has grown to almost 30 participants since its introduction in the Spring of 2018.



Further Program Information:

Play Unified Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIDzNaZ85CM>

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