

ST. AGNES JUNIOR HIGH PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

St. Agnes Speaks

The 2023 Student Success Survey provided positive feedback from students with respect to student's educational experience at St. Agnes including their relationships with staff, the inclusive nature of their learning experiences and their beliefs about being successful with academics. There were, however, two areas requiring immediate attention including student safety in the classroom and instances of racism, discrimination, and homophobia/transphobia.

In response, our staff felt strongly in supporting a school climate where every student felt heard and valued. Together we constructed our first well being strategy to provide students with a safe and meaningful way to share concerns and offer their suggestions in the spirit of school improvement.

St. Agnes Speaks asks students a weekly question using a QR code to open a Google Form. Each Form will include a question about aspects of wellness at St. Agnes. The responses provided by students, will be reviewed by our school admin team, and will inform both interventions and future programming.

It is our hope that the opportunity for students to share their perspectives, ideas, and concerns will play a pivotal role in making our school a better place for everyone.

Y mind

Last month, St. Agnes welcomed the YMCA who will be offering their Y Mind Teen program to a group of our students. Y Mind Teen is a free seven-week mental wellness program for teens ages 13 to 18 who are experiencing symptoms of mild-to-moderate anxiety or stress. Participants learn and practice evidence-based strategies to help manage anxiety. The program is led by trained mental health professionals and gives teens the chance to connect with peers who are experiencing similar thoughts and feelings

St. Agnes Speaks

Question 1



School News

Student of the Month

To promote success in and out of the classroom, St. Agnes promotes a student of the month award. This award is designed for staff to nominate and select students who promote and take pride in St. Agnes Junior High School and in themselves. Our student of the month for October was Leah Miller.

Leah has demonstrated excellence in and outside of the classroom by through her engagement, work ethic and positive attitude. She is a source of support for other students and always willing to help teachers during instructional time.

Outside of school Leah challenges herself by exploring new activities and opportunities. Despite not playing soccer before junior high, Leah made the school team. Leah gives 100% every time she steps onto the field and is a supportive and positive teammate.

Congratulations to Leah!



Take our kids to work

Our grade 9 students recently participated in Take Our Kids to Work Day. This annual national career exploration event is held every November, and this year it was back at “full strength” after a few years of pandemic-related restrictions. Most of our Grade 9s spent Wednesday, November 1st joining a working professional at their place of work. In coaching our students to explore what careers are a budding interest for them, TOKTW was a valuable opportunity for them to investigate what a particular job looks and feels like.

Crosswalk Safety

Earlier this week a message was sent to the community to address incidents pertaining to crosswalk safety. In late October, two of our students were involved in separate automobile-pedestrian accidents on Mumford Road during the lunch hour. Ensuring the safety of our students when they are walking to and from school is of utmost importance. To support this process, members of the Halifax Regional Police will be visiting our school soon to remind our students about the importance of being vigilant when using crosswalks.

School News

Mathematics 8

Now in its third year, our Grade 8 staff continue their efforts to increase achievement in Math. As mentioned in the October SAC meeting, data from last year's RWM 8 indicates that strategies applied by our Grade 8 teachers are supporting student progress.

In our October data pull, we identified 37 students who were not meeting grade level expectations. Following our first strategy of using Parent/Guardian questionnaires coupled with student-teacher conferencing to gain a better understanding of our learners, we are now focusing our efforts on assessing through triangulation. With an eye toward equitable assessment practices the team has determined that a balanced formative assessment approach with increased emphasis on observations and conversations was necessary in determining student understanding. We hope to see positive impact when we complete our next data pull in November.

Literacy Initiative

The Grade 7 English team has embarked on a new teaching approach to support improved Literacy scores for their students. After introductions to both short cycle planning and data driven decision making, the team completed an analysis of Grade 6 RWM scores as well as current work samples to determine that writing conventions should be the focus of their work. For the next 6 weeks the team will use prompts from a variety of provocations, images, and ideas to complete a weekly free write. The teachers will support growth in conventions via mentor text and exemplars as well as student-teacher conferencing as a formative assessment strategy.



Very happy students at our school dance in October

School News

Youth Project Presentation

Brody Weaver, the Educational Coordinator with the Youth Project, will be at our school this month to visit with our grade 7 classrooms. Brody is a leader in helping youth create spaces of learning which celebrate diversity, and creating environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth to thrive and become change makers in their communities. She will facilitate 1-hour workshops with our Grade 7 students to support their understanding of the necessity and beauty of creating safe and inclusive spaces for all at school. This is a critical piece of citizenship education that we are proud to be bringing to the youngest members of our St. Agnes school population.

Food Pantry

Staff at St. Agnes have always strived to provide the best possible educational experience for our students. However, we are increasingly aware of the challenges some of our students face outside the school that significantly impact their ability to concentrate, learn and thrive. One such challenge that demands our immediate attention is food insecurity among our students.

While our school breakfast program has grown significantly in the last two years, we have noted an increase in requests for lunch items and groceries. In response to this concern, we are attempting to widen our scope to provide a food pantry for students to access throughout the day. After creating a space in the main office, we hope to offer students a variety of food items to access during the lunch hour or to take home to their families.

While the school will be supporting this important resource via a stuff a bus campaign and other fundraising efforts, we are calling upon our school community to come together and provide the support that our students need through donations. We welcome non-perishable food items, grocery gift cards, and monetary donations to purchase essential supplies for families in need.

We believe that together, we can positively impact the lives of our students. No child should have to worry about where their next meal will come from, especially in a community as caring and supportive as ours.



Upcoming Events

El Jones

El Jones is coming to St. Agnes Junior High! El Jones is a poet, journalist, author, professor and a major activist in Halifax and throughout Canada. She was the Poet Laureate for Halifax from 2013 to 2015. She has published three books and co-hosts a radio show called Black Power Hour that showcases cultural, social, and political issues relevant for Black people in addition to supporting people in prison. She currently teaches at Mount Saint Vincent where she earned a Chair in Women's Studies since 2017.

El will be speaking to our students about a variety of important and socially relevant issues including anti-racism, our individual responsibilities within a global context, and how one's passion can be a catalyst for both opportunity and positive change



Remembrance Day

Our annual Call To Remembrance ceremony will take place on November 10th as a full school assembly. This year, we are pleased to have Major Cameron Hillier, Public Affairs Officer from the army's 5 Division, as our guest speaker. We will also have a presentation from two grade 9 students on the history of the Royal Canadian Air Force, which celebrates its 100th anniversary in April, 2024. Some grade 7 & 8 students will also participate through reading poems and the act & call to remembrance.

Many thanks go to the students who will be volunteering to participate in the ceremony, and to everyone for taking the time to remember. Lest We Forget..

NSTAY presentations

Trena Gallant, from the Nova Scotia Transition & Advocacy (NSTAY) Program, will be returning to our school in late November/early December to meet with our students. She has generously given of her time the past few years to talk to our youth about "Human Trafficking Awareness." She will educate our students on how to be safe and aware considering this very real danger among youth in Nova Scotia, and particularly in HRM. We are so pleased that we can offer this valuable educational opportunity