

LeMarchant-St. Thomas Elementary



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School and Community Context

École LeMarchant St Thomas School is a French Immersion and English program elementary school of 385 students in grades primary to six. Our school has served the community since 1923. We have two buildings, the original LeMarchant School, which is now our annex, and St. Thomas Aquinas School, which is now our main building. Our enrollment has grown steadily over the last ten years. We have four English classes and thirteen French Immersion classes from Grade Primary to Grade 6. The administration offices, the library, art class, core French class, resource, gym and music programs are in the main building. Our music programs include choir, violin, cello and band. Teachers volunteer to offer a variety of extra-curricular programs such as cross country, track & field, a "Battle of the Books" club, a chess club, a leadership team and running club. We offer early morning and af-

ter school supervision through both the EXCEL and YMCA programs. Activities such as Zumba, soccer, basketball, dance, creative theatre arts and yoga are organized by our Home & School Association and offered during our lunch hour. Parents and staff have worked with the Ecology Action center to implement an "Active Routes" to school program and we promote walking and biking to school. École LeMarchant St Thomas School provides a positive learning environment through the dedicated efforts of staff and our parent community.



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Family and Community Involvement

ÉLMSTS has a highly supportive and involved parent community. We have an active School Advisory Council (SAC), School Travel Planning Committee and Home & School Association. This year our SAC has created an "Ask Me" program to field questions from the parent community at school events. Our Home & School sponsored many school-wide performances such as Young Neptune, Thunderbird Aboriginal performances and Razzmatazz. They financially supported our Gr. 4-6 Spring Drama Performances.

Safe and Orderly Environment

LeMarchant St. Thomas School has a warm and inviting school climate as indicated in our survey responses and by comments made by visitors to the school. 77% of the one hundred and twenty-five Grade 4-6 students who responded stated that they never feel bullied and 93% said they are never treated differently because of their culture or race. 98% stated that their teacher wants them to do their best. 100% of the

teachers who responded stated that our school is usually or always a safe place and 85% feel that students usually or always treat staff with respect. We focus on a proactive approach to discipline by teaching and celebrating respect for self, others and our environment. This year we have also explored restorative practices as another method to build positive relationships.

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 (%) 2012-13	Board (%) 2012-13
Grade 2 Board		
Reading (English Program)	62%	63%
Reading (French Program)	74%	66%
Grade 3 Provincial		
Reading	91%	79%
Writing - Conventions	82%	72%
Writing - Ideas	91%	89%
Writing - Language Use	100%	84%
Writing - Organization	91%	82%
Math Assessments	School (%) 2012-13	Board (%) 2012-13
Grade 6 Provincial		
Mathematics	95%	77%
Literacy Assessments	School (%) 2012-13	Board (%) 2012-13
Grade 6 Provincial		
Reading	98%	79%
Writing - Conventions	93%	76%
Writing - Ideas	100%	91%
Writing - Language Use	95%	85%
Writing - Organization	93%	82%

This year our board and provincial literacy results were strong. Student achievement in reading improved from Grade 2 to Grade 3 and our Primary to Grade 3 teachers received professional development for both explicit teaching of letter sounds and vocabulary as well as best practices in reading assessment and instruction.

Classroom Assessment

Most teachers have worked in professional learning communities again this year to focus on common planning and assessment. We have had a school wide focus on self-assessment through student portfolios, self-reflection and goal setting. Many teachers opted for student-led conferences during Parent/Teacher Interviews. Research shows that students who are involved in their own assessment show greater improvements in their learning. We have continued to monitor reading accuracy, fluency and students' ability to ask critical questions of texts. Because reading fluently and accurately in French, while maintaining comprehension in the early grades has been a challenge, teachers from primary to Grade 2 have focused on enhancing oral literacy and reading readiness. We have observed significant improvement in our younger students' oral literacy skills in French. Our Primary French Immersion students can ask and respond to a variety of questions in French and they recognize and use key French vocabulary. Teachers in the upper grades have observed that students are reading for meaning. Classroom assessments also show growth in the students' ability to reflect critically on what they are reading. During a recent performance of Vilvaldi's Ring of Fire, teachers noted a significant improvement in the level and types of questions students asked the performers after the show, indicating a transfer of critical literacy skills.

Our math data shows that as the concepts become more challenging student scores decrease on external assessments. Teachers are working on improving students' consistent use of concrete materials, pictures and/or verbal explanations for mathematical problem solving. Teachers attended professional development this year focusing on effective implementation of the new P-3 Mathematics curriculum which will begin September 2013. We will continue to analyze our math data next year as we enter year two of the accreditation process and work collaboratively towards our math goal to encourage a deeper understanding of math concepts.

Students who are struggling may have adaptations to their programming, which may include regular resource support or extra help from their classroom teacher. We also have many family and community volunteers that provide additional one on one support for students. We have also focussed on providing more additional challenges for students who learn quickly or already understand the outcomes being introduced.



Student Engagement

Our students demonstrate a high level of engagement with academic, musical, athletic and extra-curricular activities. 95% of our Grade 4-6 students who responded to our survey stated that they try their best at school. 84% stated that they learn about living in a healthy way, 85% say their language arts assignments are just right and 79% believe they are good at math. 50% participate in a sports activity and 60% participate in a musical activity. We have 69 students in choir, over 50 students play violin, 18 Grade 4&6 students are in cello and 40 of our Grade 6 students are in band. Most of our eligible students participated in running club, track & field or cross country teams.

Time to Learn

All of our teachers' timetables are reviewed by administration to ensure that they are meeting the Department of Education's "Time to Learn" requirements. Specialist classes are scheduled to maximize learning time and allow grade-level teachers common meeting times. 70% of the teachers who responded to the survey stated that there are minimal interruptions to student learning due announcements or extra-curricular activities and 73% said that there are few interruptions due to discipline issues.

Professional Development

Teachers at LeMarchant St Thomas are continually involved in many forms of professional development. Several teachers attended the Debbie Dillar literacy conference, HRSB French literacy consultant led a full-day professional development session on the importance of oral literacy. P-1 English and French teachers attended HRSB professional development on oral literacy. Our HRSB math coach supported our grades two and three teachers through in-class mentoring as well. The focus of our professional development was on the three-part lesson, effective communication in math, and developing common assessment in both math and literacy. We have also been exploring restorative practice to enhance student relationships.

Additional School Supports

- full time secretarial support
- library support specialist
- access to literacy coach
- French language monitors
- access to a math coach
- specialized art teacher
- violin and cello teachers
- band teacher
- French resource
- English resource
- English as a Second Language teacher
- school planning team
- program planning team
- school psychologist
- speech language pathologist
- early literacy teacher
- access to a behavioural specialist
- access to a school social worker
- access to a school health nurse
- access to severe learning disability support



Continuous School Improvement

École LeMarchant St. Thomas School community has high expectations for our students. Parents, visitors and teachers state that we have a warm and inviting school climate and that ELMST is a safe, respectful place to work and learn. The success of our school is a result of the commitment and dedication of all of the members of our school community.

We have now completed Year 1 of the Halifax Regional School Board's Continuous School Improvement process for accreditation. We are pleased with the overall process and results. We received approval for our CSI 5 Year Plan, and members of the Peer Review Team were very pleased with our work. We have already begun providing professional development for staff in the area of running an ef-

fective professional learning community and initiating common assessments. This professional development will continue in September of 2013 to assist our staff in the implementation of the strategies designed to meet our goals chosen for math and literacy.

School Goals

As we enter Year 2 of the accreditation process, we will be working towards a goal in both mathematics and literacy.

Mathematics Goal: Our students will demonstrate improvement in their ability to independently communicate their mathematical understanding in a variety of ways, justify their thinking and make connections.

Strategies:

- Teachers will work collaboratively and effectively in professional learning communities.
- Teachers will develop a common understanding of what it means for students to: (a) communicate their understanding in a variety of ways, (b) justify their thinking and (c) make connections.
- Teachers will develop a common understanding of a problem-solving approach to mathematics.
- Teachers will implement a problem-solving approach in the classroom on a regular basis.
- Teachers will develop a common understanding of balanced assessment and use the results of the assessments to inform

practice.

Literacy Goal: Our students will demonstrate increased ability to communicate through writing. Specifically, students will write to fulfill a purpose, develop their ideas with detail and present their ideas in an organized sequence.

Strategies:

- Teachers will work collaboratively and effectively in professional learning communities.
- Teachers will develop a common understanding of effective communication in writing at and across grade levels and use this understanding to inform instructional practices.
- Teachers will ensure instruction and assessment practices reflect the reciprocity between reading and writing.
- Teachers will develop a common understanding of effective instruction and use a Workshop approach.
- Teachers will develop a common understanding of a balanced approach to assessment in writing.

In addition to the above listed strategies, we will assign a math lead teacher and literacy lead teacher. These teachers will act as a support or mentor to colleagues as we endeavor to work towards our goals.

We worked very hard as a staff to develop these goals that we believe will greatly benefit our students and look forward to reporting on our progress next year.



Every Student Can Learn. Every School Will Improve.

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