



DECEMBER · KESIKEWIKU'S · DECEMBRE 2020



REGIONAL UPDATE

Monthly Newsletter of the Tri-County Regional Centre for Education

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Deck the Halls of YCMHS!

A milk crate Christmas tree is on display at Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School. The creation was built by students, Hayden, Ben, and Harley, along with Ms. Morton.



A Message from the Regional Executive Director

As we enter the second wave of COVID-19 here in Nova Scotia, we have started to see the first cases in schools. This was not unexpected. Our schools are a reflection of our communities and we have been preparing for this possibility along with a variety of learning scenarios.

As indicated in Nova Scotia's Back to School Plan, there are number of learning models we may need to move to. If there is a case of COVID-19 in one of our schools, Public Health will advise us whether or not to close a school, or to send a classroom home. Public Health may also advise that one school, or multiple schools should move to blended/partial in-school learning or learning from home.

Planning for different learning scenarios

As we have seen with the previous cases of COVID-19 in schools, each situation has a different set of circumstances and these factors play a role in the direction of Public Health. While we certainly hope our schools remain as they have since September, we have worked through many scenarios, including changes to class sizes and staffing. We have created a mock classroom (pictured above) where we tested a variety of classroom layouts and designs.

TCRCE along with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development have also been preparing should Public Health advise us to move to an at-home learning model. In that case, primary to grade twelve teachers will be delivering online classes and students will participate in a combination of real-time instruction along with self-directed learning.

"As we have seen with the previous cases of COVID-19 in schools, each situation has a different set of circumstances and these factors play a role in the direction of Public Health."

-Dr. Chris Boulter



Pictured above: a mock classroom TCRCE has prepared to assemble a variety of class scenarios should we need to move to blended learning model.



From left to right: Allen Whittaker, Yarmouth TAP Teacher, Zach Churchill, NS Minister of Education & Early Childhood Development, and Dr. Chris Boulter, TCRCE Regional Executive Director.

"When we first started connecting schools to the Internet, none of us could have dreamed of a day when the majority of the population would be walking around with a computer in their pocket. Now that we have reached that point, our schools need to be able to prepare all our students for the future we can't yet see."

- **Allen Whittaker**
Yarmouth TAP
Teacher

Regional Executive Director Message Cont'd.

Devices & technology upgrades

On November 23rd, we hosted Zach Churchill, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development at our regional office for a virtual announcement. The Province of Nova Scotia announced they would be investing \$21.5 million dollars into Chromebooks and technology updates. We were thrilled to hear this news, as it means students in TCRCE who need a device will have access to one, ensuring quality education for all, whether they are learning at school or at home.

I have not forgotten that we are entering the holiday season. December is a time of excitement and joy in our schools. Although, events will look different this year, staff are using their creativity to improvise and have been coming up with new ways to celebrate the season. Be sure to follow us on social media to see those activities.

I wish you all a safe, happy, and healthy holiday.

All the best,

Dr. Chris Boulter

Regional Executive Director of Education
TCRCE
Twitter: @drboulter

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS



Mrs. Mundell's Forest Ridge Academy students are focused as they work on a lesson outside (above).

Students at Clark's Harbour Elementary School enjoy their new playground equipment which opened in early December.



Pictured above are Jaleel and Sonya executing a very challenging yoga pose called 'fallen angel' in Mrs. LeBlanc's yoga studio at YCMHS.

Students and staff at Digby Elementary School take part in tie dye day! (left)



"It's important we hear first-hand from African Nova Scotian learners on their racialized experiences at school."

- Martin Morrison,
Coordinator of African Nova Scotian Education

Ancestral Roots Reboot

Throughout October and November, TCRCE Regional Executive Director, Dr. Chris Boulter, along with Coordinator of African Nova Scotian Education, Martin Morrison, visited local high schools to speak directly to African Nova Scotian students to gather feedback on their school experiences.

These talks took place at Digby Regional High School, Yarmouth Consolidated High School, Saint Mary's Bay Academy, and Shelburne Regional High School.

The idea to visit these schools stemmed from last year's Ancestral Roots Summit, held by the Delmore Buddy Day Learning Institute where Dr. Boulter participated as a panel member and students spoke to him about their experience and challenges at school as racialized learners. There, he made a commitment to come back and meet with TCRCE students directly to hear more how learners in this region are experiencing school.



Martin Morrison speaks to students as part of the Ancestral Roots Reboot.

Martin Morrison, calls these recent sessions the "Ancestral Roots Reboot" and says many more African Nova Scotian students were able to share their experiences at these individual school meetings because many participants were not able to attend the summit last year.

Many students commented that topics covered throughout their schooling were of similar themes. Dr. Boulter and Morrison heard feedback that there is an overemphasis on slavery, which can be re-traumatizing. Students also commented that there is a recycling of civil rights activities explored in elementary, reoccurring again at the junior high level. African Nova Scotian learners are eager to learn about the contributions of their ancestors to Canadian society.

"It's important we hear first-hand from African Nova Scotian learners on their racialized experiences at school," says Morrison. "Gaining this personal knowledge through this open dialogue will help us improve."

Morrison says he is now analyzing the information collected with his colleagues and will then share the results back with each school. The feedback will be used to develop a systemic response to the concerns expressed and will work through outcomes with each school.

Teacher Spotlight

Congratulations to Saint Mary's Bay Academy teacher, Erin Mullen, on being recognized as this month's Brilliant Labs NS Inspiration Maker.



Inspiration Makers!



This year Brilliant Labs is looking for those teachers who inspire others to be their best, and who are taking chances to try new things to educate students. We're pleased to share this month's Nova Scotia "Inspiration Maker!" Keep up the fantastic project work Erin!

WHO: ERIN MULLEN

WHERE: SAINT MARY'S BAY ACADEMY

WEYMOUTH, NOVA SCOTIA

TWITTER: @BOUDICCA85

Erin teaches Film & Video 12, English 11, Communication Tech 12, and Tech 7-9. She is the school's Makerspace lead and has led robotics clubs, coding challenges and Lego League. She also mentors in 3D printing and other hands on skills like engraving.



Weymouth Elementary grade six teacher, Amanda Bright, was recently honoured with this Kente Stole from TCRCE in recognition of her representation as an African Nova Scotian teacher and community leader. The Stole is made from Kente cloth, which was traditionally worn by royalty in the West African country of Ghana.

Kente cloths have now become a common sight at graduations and special events throughout Canada to honour the contributions of people of African Ancestry to Canadian society. TCRCE is pleased to provide these Stoles to our African Nova Scotian teachers and staff members in acknowledgement of their contributions to a more inclusive and equitable work environment.



Our breakfast program received a generous donation from Coastal Financial Credit Union. The \$25,000 will be put to very good use and help fill many bellies! Thank you.

THE HEALTHY *Hangout*

Tips to Manage Holiday Stress

The holidays are typically a time for gatherings and celebrations when many get together with friends and family. It can also be a time when many people feel alone and disconnected, and this will likely be a feeling even more experience this year as we live through a pandemic.

The stresses of the season combined with COVID-19 may feel overwhelming and it's important we focus on our wellbeing and mental health. Here are some tips from **Red Cross Canada**:

Try these relaxation techniques:

- **Hobbies.** Discover a new pastime or take part in an activity that you enjoy.
- **Physical activity.** It has countless benefits for your health and wellbeing that go beyond better stress management.
- **Yoga, breathing exercises and meditation.** All these techniques are highly effective for managing stress.
- **Visualization.** Visualization techniques tap into your ability to form positive mental images.
- **Massage therapy.** Many types of massages exist, and some have a particular focus on relaxation.

How to take care of yourself:

- Understand what causes stress and recognize your own feelings.
- Be patient with yourself and those close to you – it takes time to manage feelings.
- Learn how to manage your reactions to these experiences.
- Focus on the things you have control over.

Additional Resources:

kidshelpphone.ca or 1-800-668-6868
Provincial Mental Health & Addictions
Crisis Line 1-888-429-8167

CONTACT TRACING IN SCHOOLS

What steps does Public Health take when a case of COVID-19 is reported in a school community?



- STEP 1:** Public Health receives notice a person connected to a school community has tested positive for COVID-19.
- STEP 2:** Public Health starts a case investigation. This includes identifying close contacts of the person.
- STEP 3:** Public Health finds out if the person could have passed the virus on to others while at school.



IF YES, Public Health contacts school principal and local RCE/CSAP/MK* to let them know we are investigating.



IF NO, there is no further action required for the school community.

*RCE: Regional Centre for Education / CSAP: Conseil scolaire acadien provincial / MK: Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey

- STEP 4:** Public Health collects data and looks closely at the COVID-19 risk for the school community.
- STEP 5:** Public Health prepares a general notice for the principal to send to the entire school/staff/parent community.
- STEP 6:** Public Health finds out who was in close contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 in school.



FOR CLOSE CONTACTS, Public Health prepares a letter for the school to send to close contacts only. Public Health interviews the close contacts and provides direction for isolation and testing.



FOR PERSONS NOT IN CLOSE CONTACT, no further contact is made.



When there are no additional cases, Public Health closes the investigation.

Updated Oct. 26, 2020

For information visit: novascotia.ca/coronavirus

