



South Shore
Regional Centre for Education

REGIONAL UPDATE

February 2025

African Heritage Month



Each February, Nova Scotia celebrates African Heritage Month, recognizing the important contributions and vibrant culture and history of African Nova Scotians.

This year's theme, Legacy in Action: Celebrating Black Brilliance, highlights the achievements and resilience of African Nova Scotians, who have shaped the province's history for more than 400 years. The month-long celebration includes events and activities designed to educate, inspire and build connections across the province.

Schools throughout SSRCE will join in these celebrations and learning experiences. While we use February as an opportunity to highlight African Nova Scotian Heritage, we recognize that our responsibility to be culturally responsive and equitable, extends beyond this month and is a priority throughout the year.

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A Message from the Regional Executive Director

Firstly, congratulations to our high school students who have recently completed their assessments, marking the end of the first term. As we move into the second term, our education staff will be reflecting on student progress and setting new goals. I encourage students, along with parents/guardians, to do this as well. By working together, we can support our students in their academic journey and ensure they have the resources to succeed.

I am excited to share with you this month's newsletter. We have two themes in this month's report, African Heritage Month and Literacy. While both are separate topics, everything we do in education is intertwined and these two themes are no exception. For example, the photos you see to the right are from West Northfield Elementary School, where the pre-primaries recently read "More than Peach," a story that inspires inclusivity by exploring how skin can be any number of colours. After the story, the pre-primaries examined their arms to see all the beautiful skin colours.



Pre-primaries at West Northfield Elementary School, read "More than Peach" and then examine their arms to see all their beautiful skin colours.

February is African Heritage Month

Each February, we celebrate the significant contributions and the vibrant culture and history of African Nova Scotians. We also recognize that the education and appreciation of African heritage should not be confined to just one month. Integrating this education throughout the entire year helps to foster a deeper understanding and respect for the diverse histories and cultures that shape our community.

A Look at Literacy

Reading and writing are fundamental skills that open doors to knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking. On pages 5-8 of this report, you will find an in-depth feature on how we are working to grow literacy skills in all grade levels. I am proud of the work being done across the region and I hope this information will provide you with insights on why literacy is one the main goals of our regional student success plan.

We've also included various literacy supports for families. We encourage you to engage with your children (especially our younger learners) in reading activities, explore books by African Canadian authors, and discuss the diverse stories and perspectives they bring.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement in your child's education. Together, we can foster a love for learning and celebrate the rich heritage that shapes our community.

Sincerely,

Angela Gladwin

SSRCE Regional Executive Director

FAMILY LITERACY DAY

Family Literacy Day takes place every January 27th to raise awareness about the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family.

Taking time every day to read or do a learning activity with children is crucial to a child's development, improving a child's literacy skills dramatically, and can help a parent improve their skills as well.

Many SSRCE schools celebrated **Family Literacy Day** the last week in January.

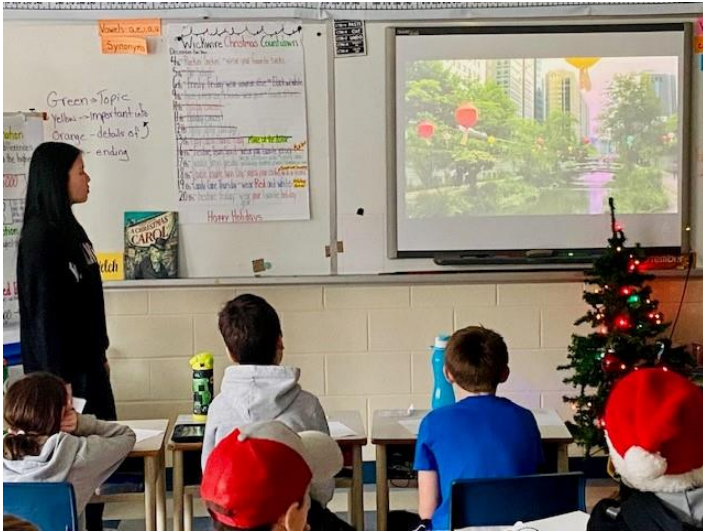


Pictured above: the Home and School Association for **Chester District School** supported students by purchasing book marks that the students exchanged with one another to promote reading. Chester District also invited families to come to the school to read with their children.



Pictured above: Literacy week celebrations at **Petite Riviere Elementary School**. Students participated in flashlight reading, shared reading, along with writing and story telling.

SCHOOL SNAPSHOTS



The Nova Scotia International Student Program (NSISP) students at **Liverpool Regional High School** prepared presentations about their home countries to present to the elementary students at **Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy**. The students had lots of great questions and expressed their enjoyment of learning about new cultures.



Visual Arts students at **North Queens Community School** recently displayed their art collections in the school's annual student art showcase. Thanks to everyone who attended to show their support along with the art critics who took time to chat with the students.



These **Bayview Community School** students show their worry dolls. Worry dolls, or Muñeca quitapena in Spanish, are small, hand-made dolls that are used to help children and adults deal with their worries and fears. According to legend, a Maya princess named Ixmucane received a gift from the sun god that allowed her to solve any problem. She taught her people to make worry dolls and tell them their troubles before going to sleep. The dolls would then take away their worries and bring them peace.

INSIDE SSRCE CLASSROOMS:

Growing Strong Literacy Skills

On-going Assessment to Inform Teaching and Learning

Teachers in SSRCE are assessing reading and writing on a frequent basis. Teachers use these on-going assessments to prioritize learning goals for their whole class, small groups of students, and individual learners. This informs a responsive, systematic plan for instruction.

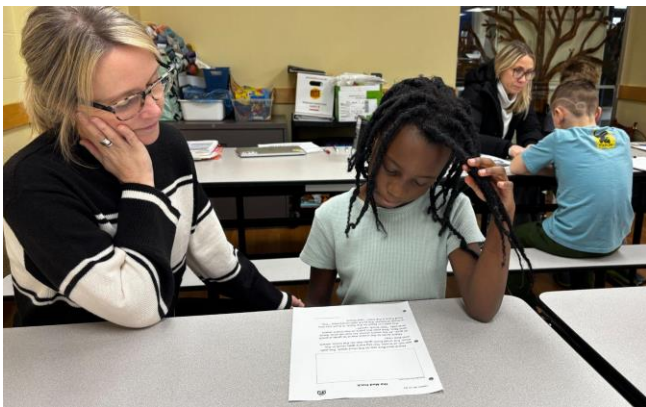
School teams, with the support of regional staff, review results on an ongoing basis and identify students who need support and plan responsive actions. Responding to student learning is the premise of Collaborative Learning Time (CLTs), and Teaching Support Teams (TSTs), and staff meeting work. The assessment results often direct school staffing, resources, and interventions as needed.

SSRCE regional staff use the assessment results to develop school support plans, distribute support, and target professional learning.

Foundational Word Reading and Spelling (Grades Primary - 2)

Foundational reading and spelling instruction in Primary to Grade 2 is essential for building the core skills students need for lifelong literacy. Teaching focuses on developing phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, which are critical for reading success.

Strong spelling instruction reinforces decoding and word recognition, supporting both reading and writing development. These early skills create a solid base for future academic achievement and instill confidence in young learners.



All teachers in Primary to Grade 2 in SSRCE have received extensive training in foundational word reading and spelling instruction. This training equips them

with research-based and evidence-based strategies to teach phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and spelling effectively. By leveraging this knowledge, teachers ensure that every student builds the essential literacy skills needed for more complex reading and writing.

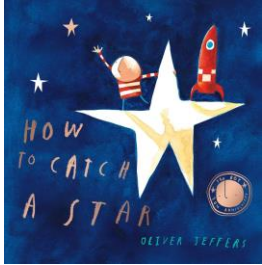


Teachers are utilizing universal screeners to assess students' foundational literacy skills in Primary to Grade 2. These tools provide valuable insights into the development of a students' literacy skills. By analyzing the results, teachers identify students' strengths and areas for growth, enabling them to tailor instruction to meet individual needs. This proactive approach ensures all learners receive the support necessary for reading success.

What's an interactive read aloud?

Students participate in an interactive read aloud of the book. *How to Catch a Star* by Oliver Jeffers (pictured left).

An interactive read-aloud is a powerful instructional practice where the teacher reads a text aloud to students, modeling fluent reading and instructional reading goals and engaging them in meaningful conversations about the text. It fosters comprehension, critical thinking, and oral language development by encouraging students to make predictions, ask questions, and share their insights during and after the reading.



Students were asked “What would you do if you had a star of your own?”

A student responded: “I would cuddle it and read to it.”



Reading Comprehension Strategy –

Determining Importance “The Gist” (Grades 3-8)

Earlier this year, Grade 3-8 teachers were trained in thinkSRSD’s *Release Writers* program, which supports students in developing informational and persuasive writing skills while integrating essential reading strategies. A key component of the program is teaching students to read high-quality texts, summarize key ideas using “gist” statements, and closely reread to gather evidence needed to respond to a prompt.

Determining importance is a foundational reading skill that helps students focus on key ideas, distinguish them from less relevant details, and prioritize information. Once students identify the main idea in a text, they perform a close reading of the text, highlighting and annotating to gather specific evidence needed to respond effectively to the prompt. This structured approach strengthens both comprehension and writing skills.

What’s in a gist statement?

Who/What?	Did What?	When/Where?	Joiner Word (but, and...)	Why/What Happened?	
				Who/What?	Did What?

Next time you read a story, a chapter in a book, watch a movie or television show, try creating a gist statement!

Reading Response Strategy – Two Page Spread (Grades 7-12)

Reading expert, Penny Kittle, shared her two-page spread reading response strategy at last year's annual NSTU conference day. This strategy deepens students' comprehension and engagement with texts. With this approach, students record key quotes or passages along with their reactions or observations while also summarizing main ideas, making connections (text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world), and posing questions. This structured method encourages active reading, critical thinking, and organized reflection. Two-page spreads offer a creative and meaningful way for students to engage deeply with texts and enhance their understanding.

Check out this beautiful example of a student's two-page spread for the novel *Inkling* by Kenneth Oppel.



Family Literacy Supports

Raz-Plus (Grades Primary - 6)

Raz-Plus is an online learning platform developed by Learning A-Z, designed to support reading practice and literacy practice for students in Primary to Grade 6. It combines teacher-led instruction with independent practice, making it a valuable resource for students to access at home. Elementary teachers and students in SSRCE have access to this platform. For more information contact your child's teacher.



In 2024, a virtual training session was held for teachers in SSRCE to explore the features and benefits of **Raz-Plus**. The session focused on leveraging the platform's books, interactive tools, and assessment features to enhance literacy instruction. Practical demonstrations and Q&A segments provided actionable strategies for integrating Raz-Plus into SSRCE classrooms, empowering educators to support learners effectively.

Highlights of the Raz-Plus platform:

- Students can continue practicing at home with the same tools and resources.
- Students can access books anytime, anywhere, fostering a habit of regular reading.
- Parents can actively participate in their child's literacy development by monitoring progress and encouraging practice.
- Provides parent accounts for home access to reading materials.
- Addresses key elements of literacy, such as phonics, fluency, comprehension, and writing.
- Adaptive and diverse content engages students of all levels, including English language learners.
- Access to thousands of books and passages in printable, projectable, and digital formats.
- Variety of genres, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and more.
- Annotations, highlighting, and drawing tools help students engage with the text.
- Embedded comprehension quizzes to assess understanding.







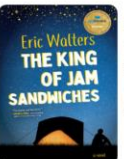










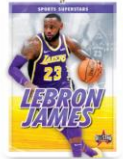
Sora Library (Grades Primary - 12)

Access Digital Books with Sora!



Students can enjoy a world of digital books through the Sora app, available directly on their GNSPES Launch Page. With just a few clicks, they can access the SSRCE digital library and start exploring a variety of ebooks and audiobooks for reading and learning.

Additionally, if students have a South Shore Public Library card, they can link it to their Sora account for even more access to a wide range of books. It's a simple way to expand their reading options and discover even more stories, all in one place!

<p>Diary of an Evil Queen - Stacia Deutsch Ever After High Series</p>  <p>Borrow</p> <p>Read sample</p> <p>Add to list</p> <p></p>	<p>Reckless, Glorious, Girl - Ellen Hagan</p>  <p>Borrow</p> <p>Read sample</p> <p>Add to list</p> <p></p>	<p>The King of Jam Sandwiches - Eric Walters</p>  <p>Borrow</p> <p>Read sample</p> <p>Add to list</p> <p></p>	<p>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban - J. K. Rowling #3 in Harry Potter Series</p>  <p>Borrow</p> <p>Listen to sample</p> <p>Add to list</p> <p></p>
<p>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire - J. K. Rowling #4 in Harry Potter Series</p>  <p>Borrow</p> <p>Listen to sample</p> <p>Add to list</p> <p></p>	<p>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix - J. K. Rowling #5 in Harry Potter Series</p>  <p>Borrow</p> <p>Listen to sample</p> <p>Add to list</p> <p></p>	<p>Diary of a Wimpy Kid - Jeff Kinney #1 in Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series</p>  <p>Place hold </p> <p>Listen to sample</p> <p>Add to list</p> <p></p>	<p>LeBron James - Anthony K. Hewson Sports Superstars Series</p>  <p>Borrow</p> <p>Read sample</p> <p>Add to list</p>

Strengthening Local Voice

We are building on our commitment to strengthen local voice in the public education system and are pleased to share information on upcoming sessions designed to engage and collaborate with our local stakeholders.

Regional School Advisory Council - happening within the next month and invitations will be sent to members directly.

Student Advisory Council - happening within the next month and invitations will be sent to members directly.

SSRCE Public Engagement Session - We will share information on this session with parents/guardians once the date is determined.

Registrations for 2025 Now Open



We are now welcoming registrations for September 2025!

Registrations are being accepted for pre-primary, along with NEW primary students. Please share with anyone you know who has a child(ren) ready to start pre-primary.

[Register online here.](http://www.ssrce.ca/register)

Parent/Guardian Questions or Concerns?

1. **For curriculum or classroom-related questions**, start with your child's teacher. If required, follow up with the school principal.
2. **For questions about the pre-primary program**, start with your child's Lead Early Childhood Educator. If required, follow up with the school principal.
3. **For questions about programs and services available from community partners at a school**, and how to access these supports, please contact SchoolsPlus (Shannon Vincent at 902-523-1451).
4. **For questions related to busing, bus stops, and or/bus routes**, please contact SSRCE Transportation at 902-541-8252 or busdispatch@ssrce.ca
5. **For school closure/weather inquiries**, contact 902-523-5368 or weather@ssrce.ca.
6. **For general inquiries**, please contact the SSRCE office, where someone will be happy to connect you with the appropriate staff member. Email receptionist@ssrce.ca or 902-543-2468.

Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence - Submissions Now Open

Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence 2025



Do you know a student with a great idea? Do they want to start their own business?

Encourage them to apply for the Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence! Three winning submissions will receive \$1,000 to help support or start their business.

Apply online [here](#).

The award is open to students in grades 6–12 in Nova Scotia public school.

Deadline for submissions is February 28!

SHP Public Website

School Health Partnership has launched a new public website that will support families and school staff through sharing information on the program and easily accessible resources for school staff.

The site can be accessed [here](#).

The School Health Partnership (SHP) is an integrated partnership among:

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
- Regional Centres for Education (RCEs)
- Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)
- Nova Scotia Health (NSH)
- IWK Health (IWK)

The SHP Program will help ensure that students with healthcare needs have access to an equitable and high-quality education, using an integrated approach to students' healthcare needs in alignment with the EECD [Inclusive Education Policy](#). The objective of the SHP Program is to support students with health conditions so they can attend school and grow in their independence.

