

SGDSB

# Director's Newsletter

April 2015

*"Small Schools Make a Difference"*



## Outdoor Education Funding

Staff and students from across the District have enjoyed a variety of activities through funding provided through the Ministry of Education's Outdoor Education Funding. Pictured at right students and parent volunteers from MTPS enjoy the Marathon Cross Country Ski Club Trails. Elsewhere across the District students have participated in downhill skiing, ice fishing wilderness first aid training and orienteering.

The anticipated arrival of spring will hopefully bring more seasonal activities including the Outers Club Canoe trip at GCHS and the EcoBus.

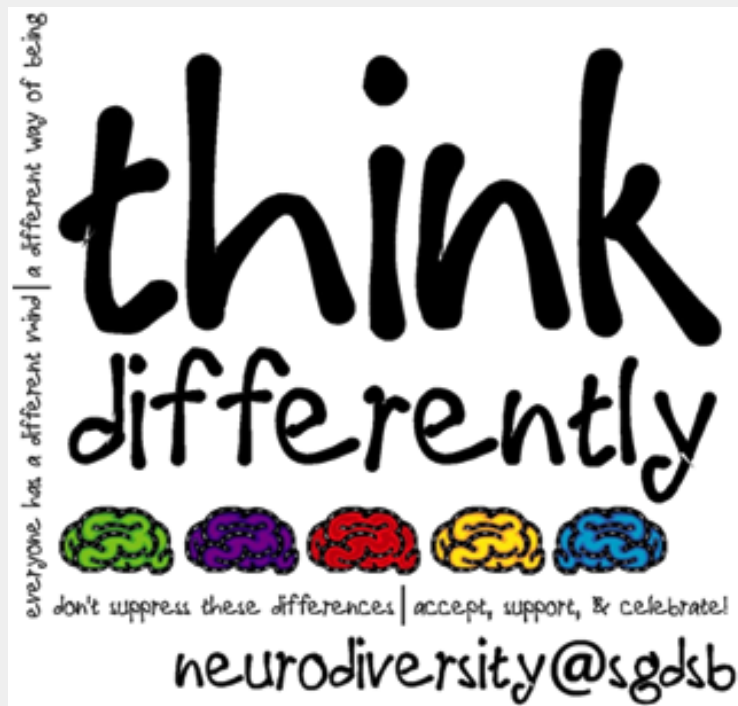


## Practicing Formative Assessment to Drive Improvement: District Support Visits

Descriptive feedback is widely recognized by the educational community as an assessment for learning tool that supports learning and growth. When learners engage in peer and self-assessment, they are providing feedback to each other or to themselves regarding the degree to which they have achieved the criteria for success and hence, the learning intention. Effective feedback includes the identification of the successes, as well as prompts/provocations regarding next steps. As a school district, we have been committed to practicing these formative strategies in all of the work that we do, including District Support Visits. These visits provide an opportunity for our schools to engage in a formal self-assessment of their progress towards achieving the goal(s) that they have collectively identified as a staff, followed by a peer-assessment which occurs when an outside team visits the school.

The outside team provides feedback based upon the criteria that was identified by the school and the Board Learning Plan criteria identified by the system. This feedback takes the format of the identification of strengths and celebrations, as well as next steps to consider, which are generally provided in the form of a question, thus allowing the school team to enter into the question in multiple ways. As the School Learning/Improvement/Growth processes are strictly formative in nature, there is no assessment of learning that takes place during these visit. These visits also provide an excellent opportunity for the entire team (both internal and external) to engage in relationship building with students and staff; another extremely important part of our commitment as a school district. We always welcome questions, invite feedback on the process, and look forward to the time to visit!

***"It was clearly evident that the support team's fundamental objective was to function in the capacity of a support unit. The review was a mechanism that facilitated encouragement, strong support, as well as the promotion of both individual and collective growth. The team radiated a dynamic positive energy. The day was rich with dialogue, collaboration, and clearly exemplified professional cohesiveness." Kevin Fitzgerald, NAPS***



## Everyone Matters Week SGDSB Celebrates Neurodiversity (April 13-17)

We launched “Neurodiversity Day” last year, hoping to bring awareness to the need to celebrate diversity in brains in the same way we celebrate biodiversity or cultural diversity. Many of the key messages we’d like to continue with this year are that:

- We are all diverse - exceptional in our own way
- We are born with different brains - experiences help to make us who we are
- The brain is often compared to a machine (important to understand the brain)
- It is important to use our brains...and grow them
- What we do impacts how we grow our brain...it is important to know who you are and how your brain works.

**We are learning that our brains make us who we are and that we need to recognize our strengths and celebrate our differences. That with a growth mindset we can grow our brains, helping us to learn anything!**

### Everyone Matters

We all shine in our own way. We are all unique, we all bring something to the world that’s slightly different than everyone else. We all matter. We all deserve to be exactly who we are without being belittled, shamed or bullied.

#### Monday, April 13th

Share your SHINE by launching the week of “Everyone Matters” with #IAM Unique selfies. Share your “IAM Unique selfies to affirm ANYTHING about you you want to proclaim. They can be group shots or individual shots. ...Upload the pics to the shared slides at [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1XHYaaS3PuHfq-XPkS\\_GBAZG7a1zG\\_BAw0tcJSbjCLhw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1XHYaaS3PuHfq-XPkS_GBAZG7a1zG_BAw0tcJSbjCLhw/edit?usp=sharing)

#### Tuesday, April 14th

The message Linda Kranz puts forward in her book “Only One You” is about valuing and celebrating diversity while encouraging each person to make a difference. Although the book is geared to younger elementary aged students, the themes of it transcend age.

#### Wednesday, April 15th

Positive Post-It Note Day <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zLteIn7IS0>

#### Thursday, April 16th

*Celebrate Neurodiversity Day.*

Be sure to check out the resources available on the vLE (d2L) under the Meeting the Needs of All Learners Course. There is a module 2015 Neurodiversity Day with some new resources. Be sure to share the Message for the Day page (there is a video in there that can be watched school wide) and then there are still also a wealth of resources under the 2014 Neurodiversity module.

#### Friday, April 17th

The Hunger Games - Katniss Everdeen and Growth Mindset

Linking the our work to growth mindset, share some information from the article below which nicely highlights how Katniss Everdeen displayed a growth mindset

<http://edublog.scholastic.com/post/growth-mindset-and-testing-what-we-can-learn-hunger-games>

## **Graduation Rates - Suzanne Eddy Student Success Lead**

The Ministry of Education will be publishing the graduation rates for every publicly funded school board in Ontario within the next few months. This rate will be based on the cohort of students who started Grade 9 five years prior, in 2009-10. Boards are currently given the information upon which to calculate both a five year and a four year graduation rate. However, only the five year rate will be published publicly.

Ontario's high school graduation rate remains strong, with an increasing number of students graduating in four years. The five –year graduation rate is stable at 83 percent, which is 15 percentage points higher than the 2003-04 rate of 68%

### **Method for Calculating Graduation Rates:**

Students are counted in a board based on the main school of their earliest enrolment count date in OnSIS during the 2009-10 academic year. Students will be counted as graduates from that board if the graduation occurs within 5 years of the grade 9 year, and that student is a pupil in an Ontario publically funded board, or within an inspected private school in Ontario which submitted the appropriate information through OnSIS.

Examples – What happens in each of the following situations?

1. A student enrolls in Semester 1 in grade 9 in a school in Superior-Greenstone. That student graduates from the same school, or another school within the board.

The student is counted as a graduate from Superior Greenstone DSB.

2. A student enrolls in Semester 1 in grade 9 in a school in Superior-Greenstone. That student moves to a different board (i.e. Lakehead DSB) at the end of grade 9. That student then graduates from the Lakehead DSB within 5 years.

- The student is counted as a graduate from Superior Greenstone DSB.

3. A student enrolls in Semester 1 in grade 9 in a school in Superior-Greenstone. That student moves to a different province at the end of grade 9. That student then graduates from a school in a different province.

- The student is not counted as a graduate from Superior Greenstone DSB.

4. A student enrolls in semester 1 in grade 9 in a school at another Ontario school board (i.e. Lakehead). That student moves to Superior Greenstone and registers at a school here at the end of grade 9. That student then graduates from Superior Greenstone with 5 years.

- The student is counted as a graduate from Lakehead DSB, not Superior Greenstone.

5. A student enrolls in Semester 1 in an inspected First Nations School and then transfers to the Superior-Greenstone DSB in Semester 2.

- The student is not included in the graduation rate for any board.

6. A student enrolls in semester 1 in a high school within the Superior-Greenstone DSB and enrolls in a program which will result in an Ontario Secondary School Certificate or a Certificate of Accomplishment.

- The student is not included in the graduation rate because he/she did not receive an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Grad rates cont...

### **Graduation Rates continued...**

Although the Superior Greenstone District School Board has not yet seen the calculated 5 year rate, we do anticipate our results will fall significantly below the provincial graduation rate.

One factor that contributes heavily to a reduced graduation rate is mobility. The original cohort for Superior Greenstone is 228 students. In this group, 42 students left our board during the 5 year period. This decline in enrollment does have a negative impact on our graduation rate.

Early calculations for the graduation rate which will be published during the 2015-16 school year, show a continued decline in numbers and hence rate.

The Student Success Initiatives at the provincial and board level target students who are at risk of not graduating within the five years. By providing programs such as dual credits, Specialist High Skills Major, credit rescue and credit recovery, student success teachers, etc., the Ministry and board provide schools with supports and options to ensure students accumulate credits, pass their OSSLT and graduate within the five years. Student success indicators such as credit accumulation, pass/fail rates in compulsory courses and EQAO rates help us target supports to the areas of greatest need.

The data provided by the province shows specifically the number of students who left early and how many credits they had when they left school. The Re-engagement initiative will target these school leavers. Funds will be given to the secondary schools to contact these early leavers who are still within the board and attempt to re-engage them with their school

### **Education Funding for 2015-16**

On March 26, 2015, the Ministry of Education issued **Ministry Memorandum 2015:B07**. This memorandum provides highlights of the 2015-16 Grants for Student Needs (GSN). The GSN for 2015-16 is estimated at \$22.5 billion which is essentially the same amount as the 2014-15 GSN.

The 2015–16 GSN funding to school boards is projected to be stable year-over-year while building further efficiencies into the funding model. This will help ensure that our publicly funded education system is fiscally sustainable to realize the province's renewed goals for education. For the elementary and secondary education sector, sound management of program spending in 2015–16 means keeping the focus on setting priorities and making strategic choices about how best to use resources to improve student achievement.

### **New Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline and Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline**

On March 26, 2015, the Ministry of Education issued **Ministry Memorandum 2015:B09**. This memorandum provides details of the new Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG), as well as the revised Facility Partnerships Guideline (now known as the Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)).

The focus of the PARG revisions is to allow school boards to have a more effective tool to address their needs to close and consolidate facilities, while continuing to ensure that communities have the opportunity to provide meaningful input.

Highlights of the new PARG:

- Requirements for School Boards to Consult with Municipal Governments and Other Community Partners on Underutilized Space
- Changes to the Accommodation Review Committee Structure
- Changes to Timelines for the Accommodation Review Process
- Changes to School Board Staff Reporting Requirements
- Introduction of Transition Plan Requirement
- Introduction of Optional Modified Accommodation Review Process





### **Students at NRHS Participate in International Intercultural Mural Exchange (IIME)**

IIME presented by Japan Art Mile is a project of international collaborative learning implemented with a school in Japan as a part of school education. Students of each class research on a global theme, share respective learning using internet, and finally express what they have collaboratively learned in a visible way of creating one mural (a big picture of 5-12 feet) together drawing half by half.

Japan Art Mile is a wonderful way to create and collaborate while fostering healthy relationships among students across international borders. Students in Colleen Rose's art class at NRHS helped to create a beautiful mural; half of which was painted in Japan.

Speaking about the project Colleen says "when we received our package from Seisa Kokusai High School at the beginning of January, we were very excited... and then a bit nervous! Their mural painting was absolutely beautiful, and we wanted to make sure that our painting would complement their design. We snacked on some tasty Japanese treats students in Japan had provided while we started to plan our composition..."

Colleen says that the students began to notice some similar themes amongst all of the ideas in her class. "Once we made these observations, we started to refine our thoughts with a new round of sketches. This process taught us so much about collaboration within our class, and helped us to develop sensitivity to the thoughts and concerns of other people". Once the composition was planned, it was time to get to work. A proper layout was essential for adding details throughout the mural's creation. After moving past the hurdle of beginning to paint, students were encouraged by the pace of the progress that they were making. Students selected colours and designs that reflected our culture and traditions, so a sense of ownership developed over the weeks that were spent painting the mural. Speaking with a sense of pride for what her students had accomplished Colleen says, "I am so proud of these students. This was not an easy task, but they were up for the challenge; their work will represent our school when these murals are exhibited at Japan Art Mile's next display".

To see the mural and a series of photos showing the progress of the students' work visit <https://northernartteacher.wordpress.com>

## Mathematics as a Focus: Update

Effective math teaching and learning continues to be a priority at Superior-Greenstone DSB. To accomplish this goal, many structures have been put into place to ensure that teachers, principals, early childhood educators and senior administration are able to engage in building their content knowledge and pedagogical repertoire, to “practice” this new learning, and to measure its impact upon student learning. As a learning community, we are striving to move our culture to one that requires all learners to think critically, as we know that thinking is the vehicle to understanding and hence, to learning. We know that learners of the 21st century require the ability to critically think and apply skills through problem solving. This shift away from our previous culture of “doing” tasks that require rote memorization will take significant time, however it is our commitment to model it in all of our professional learning, to make decisions based upon this culture and to ensure that we are valuing deep thinking in all areas

To date, many educators have been involved in numeracy learning, as the focus from Kindergarten (and with our Early Years Partners) to grade 10 has been on the continued enhancement of math conceptual understanding and procedural fluency; and how to ensure that these pieces are embedded in a balanced numeracy program. A balanced numeracy program involves students engaged in many different types of math learning including that which is modelled by the teacher, done in groups (both whole group and small group), completed independently, reinforced through the playing of games, involving exploration, wondering, questioning, trial and error, the use of literature to contextualize some problems, etc. We have not only focused on enhancing our repertoire for instruction, but also on the students’ ability to communicate their thinking both in writing and orally.

The area of greatest learning need, and thus our focus for content development, has been on proportional reasoning which is “the consideration of number in relative terms, rather than absolute terms” (*Paying Attention to Proportional Reasoning*, Ministry of Education, 2012). “It involves the deliberate use of multiplicative relationships to compare quantities and to predict the value of one quantity based on the value of another...

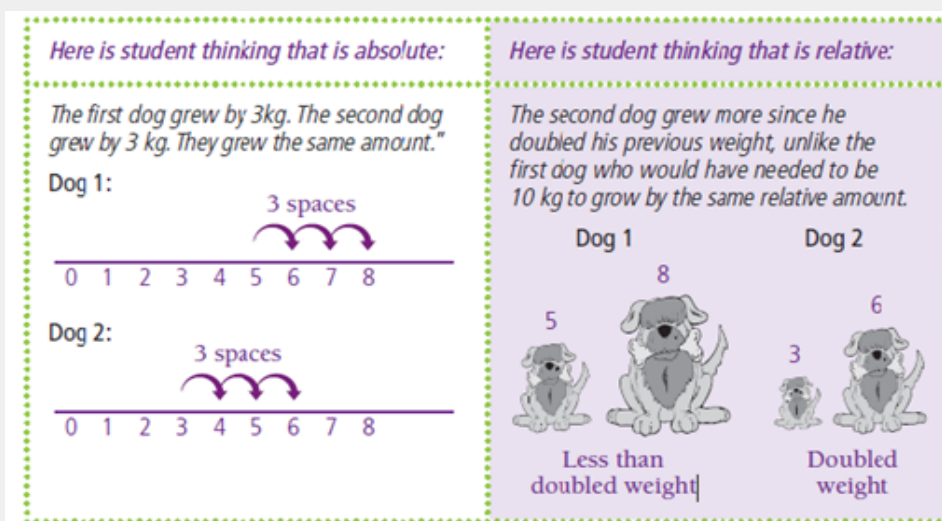
### Math: Proportional Reasoning

This year we have been focusing on Proportional Reasoning within our Primary and Junior Mathematics Inquiries. Throughout the year teachers have been building their understanding of the role that proportional reasoning plays throughout the different math strands and behind the Big Idea of thinking multiplicatively.

For those who aren’t involved...What is proportional reasoning? Proportional reasoning is “the consideration of number in relative terms, rather than absolute terms” (*Paying Attention to Proportional Reasoning*, Ministry of Education, 2012).

Our numeracy facilitators, student work study teachers and classroom teachers have been attending after school sessions as well working together within our hubs. One of our observations is how often students look at questions additively (absolute terms) instead of multiplicatively (relative terms). Our response has been to build our ability to recognize this and respond with questions and activities that will challenge the students thinking and encourage them to reflect on how they are approaching the problems.

Below you will find a copy of one of the examples from the Paying Attention to Proportional Reasoning Document that was put out by the Ministry of Education (2012). How would you solve this?



If one dog grows from 5 kilograms to 8 kilograms and another dog grows from 3 kg to 6 kg, which dog grew more?

## **Face Off in Iceland**

Riding on the success of last year's "Happiness is Hockey" tournament which brought together a ragtag team of youths from Whale Cove Nunavut with a team from GCHS, Tim Griffin and Andy McFarland have made arrangements for students from GCHS to take part in a tournament in Iceland.

The team is scheduled to depart from Thunder Bay on April 24 and will return May 1st. Arrangements have been made for the team to stay in an apartment block in Reykjavik where the team will be competing against teams from Iceland and Scandinavia. Besides playing hockey plans have also been made to visit several of Iceland's geophysical wonders including geysers, hot springs and volcanoes. Arrangements are being made for those of us not fortunate enough to travel with the team to Iceland to follow their progress through social media

## **Are you up for the Challenge?**

From May 31 to June 6, workplaces and their employees across the country are being challenged to use alternatives to driving alone for at least one day of the Commuter Challenge week.

Strap on your helmet, lace up your shoes, hop on a bus, fill your car with friends, paddle a canoe, or telecommute! This is the week to try something new or just get colleagues to join in on the fun.

The Commuter Challenge is a **National** friendly competition between workplaces, cities and provinces. Participating is easy: visit [commuterchallenge.ca](http://commuterchallenge.ca), create an account for your workplace and then get co-workers to setup personal accounts. During the week, people track their distances travelled and help mark Thunder Bay on the map. The best teams will have a chance to win great prizes.

Nearly **800 people registered locally** last year – let's amp it up! Here are some reasons to join:

**Win prizes!** Prizes will be awarded for highest percentage of participation in a workplace, most epic commute, most greenhouse gases avoided, and just for participating.

## **Retirement Workshops**

This is your last chance to register for the OTIP Retirement Workshops being held.

Tuesday, April 7 – 4:30 – Marathon

Wednesday, April 8 – 4:30 – Geraldton

Thursday, April 9 – 4:30 – Nipigon

## **Upcoming Events**

**April 3rd - Good Friday**

**April 6th - Easter Monday**

**April 16th - Neurodiversity Day**

**April 22nd - Earth Day**

**April 24th - PD - Day No classes**



Follow us on Twitter @SGDSBoard,  
or @tamblyn\_david

**May 4th - Education Week**

**May 14-17 Lake Superior Youth Symposium - Thunder Bay**

**May 28th Eco Superior Youth Conference - Terrace Bay**