

2023-2024 DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT



HWDSB
BE YOU. BE EXCELLENT.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear students, staff, families and community,

It is with great pride that I present to you my Director's Annual Report for the 2023-2024 school year.

This report celebrates the achievements and progress driven by our collective commitment to excellence and our steadfast belief in the transformative power of public education—a promise of inclusion and a beacon of hope for a brighter future for all

This year marked another step forward in our ongoing journey of continuous improvement, guided by our 2023-2028 Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the 2023-2024 Board Improvement Plan.

These plans are more than just documents; they are transformational roadmaps, aligning our collective efforts to create learning spaces where every student experiences a deep sense of belonging and can build their own future.

Central to this progress has been our steadfast dedication to trust and transparency with the communities we serve. We know that the strength of HWDSB is deeply rooted in the relationships we build and the confidence you place in us to support the success and well-being of all students.

And none of this would be possible without HWDSB staff. A heartfelt thank you to our educators, teachers, support staff, and all HWDSB employees for their dedication and commitment to their own ongoing learning, professional development, and centring the needs of every student. Your unwavering efforts are the foundation of our success and the driving force behind the opportunities we create for every learner."

Reflecting the goals of the Board Improvement Plan, the Director's Annual Report focuses on five goals that are essential to every student's success:

- **Literacy Achievement for Every Student:** From early years to graduation, we've prioritized targeted support and innovative strategies to ensure every learner builds a strong foundation in literacy.
- **Numeracy Achievement for Every Student:** With enhanced resources and engaging instruction, we've supported students in developing the problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that numeracy provides.
- **Preparedness for the Future for Every Student:** Through career-focused programs, real-world learning opportunities, and digital literacy initiatives, we've helped students prepare to thrive in a changing world.



- **Well-Being for Every Student:** Recognizing the importance of mental health and belonging, we've expanded our well-being programs and created inclusive spaces where students feel supported.
- **Engagement for Every Student:** By fostering authentic connections between students, staff, families, and community partners, we've built a shared commitment to ensuring every student's success.

This report serves as a testament to what we can achieve when we work together and reflects the unwavering dedication and resilience of our students, staff, and the partnership of families. It also underscores our steadfast commitment to Human Rights, Indigenous Education, and equity as essential pillars of our work. While we celebrate the accomplishments of this year, we remain focused on sustaining this momentum and driving meaningful progress in the years ahead.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership in shaping a brighter future for every student—a future rooted in dignity, compassion, trust, and joy.

I invite you to explore the Director's Annual Report and join us in celebrating a year of remarkable achievements and shared progress.

Yours in learning,

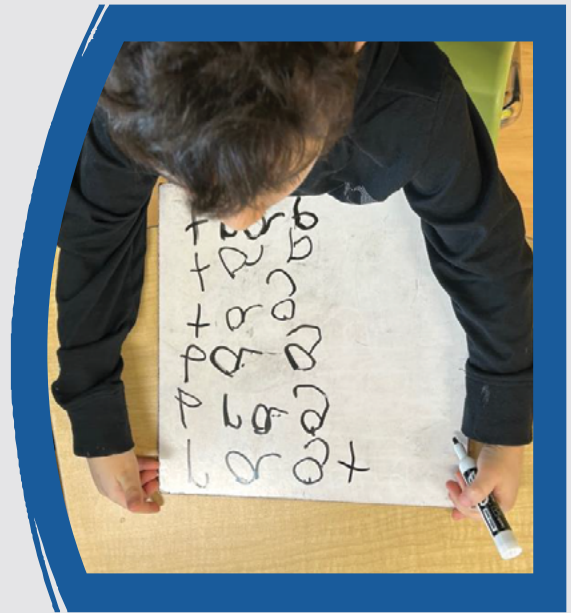
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SRP', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini
Director of Education
HWDSB

LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT FOR EVERY STUDENT

Across all schools, staff worked diligently to implement the three strategies outlined in the Board Improvement Plan to enhance literacy achievement for every student. A key step in this effort was the adoption of the Ministry-approved Acadience as the universal early reading screener. Beginning in March 2024, teachers of Kindergarten to Grade 2 students participated in over 650 minutes of training to effectively implement the screening tool. To complement this work, a decision-making tool was developed to guide staff in identifying and responding to students' individual reading needs. Targeted reading intervention supports were consistently provided through programs such as Lexia (Tier 2), Empower (Tier 3), after-school tutoring lessons, and summer reading camps.

To address literacy needs at the secondary level, two schools piloted a program where staff were trained to deliver Tier 3 support using the evidence-based Wilson Reading program. This approach provided intensive support to Grade 9 students identified with significant literacy gaps, allowing them to build critical reading and writing skills while earning high school credits. This supportive model ensured students stayed on track to achieve their secondary school diploma, reflecting the board's commitment to meeting the needs of all learners.



5% increase in Grade 3 reading and 7% increase in Grade 3 writing overall



41% increase in Grade 3 Reading at Strathcona who achieved provincials standard and above on report card (compared to last year).



28% increase in Grade 6 Writing at Hess who achieved provincial standard and above on report card (compared to last year).



4% increase in number of students successful in the OSSLT at Sir Winston Churchill and Dundas Valley.

NUMERACY ACHIEVEMENT FOR EVERY STUDENT

The Math Achievement Action Plan was implemented to support student achievement and improve results in mathematics for students in Grades 3, 6, and 9. This plan prioritized schools identified by the Ministry based on EQAO math scores and provided targeted support through math facilitators at 43 elementary and 3 secondary schools.

Professional learning opportunities were offered for principals and teachers to deepen their understanding of the curriculum, enhance math content knowledge, and focus on knowing their students as learners. A comprehensive support plan was also developed and implemented to assist principals and educators in preparing for EQAO assessments.

To address student learning gaps, small group instruction was utilized, while math facilitators modeled and supported Grade 3, 6, and 9 teachers in using evidence-based, high-impact instructional practices (HIIP). Digital tools such as Knowledgehook and MathUP were incorporated to enhance student practice and support teachers with effective resources. Collaborative work with various educators, including learning resource and ESL teachers, helped build capacity for supporting students with diverse math learning needs.

In classrooms, the focus was on building student confidence and fostering a strong math community. These efforts led to a significant increase in Grade 3 student achievement as measured by EQAO, along with slight increases in performance for students in Grades 6 and 9.



30.9% increase in Grade 6 students at Janet Lee who achieved provincial standard and above on report card] compared to last year).



33.4% increase in Grade 3 students at Cathy Weaver who achieved provincial standard and above on report card (compared to last year).



16% increase in Grade 9 students at Bernue Custis SS who achieved L3 or above on Grade 9 Math EQAO.



7.1% (MP) and 6.4% (All School) increase in Grade 3 students achieving provincial standard in Grade 3 math.

PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FUTURE FOR EVERY STUDENT

Staff have remained dedicated to creating meaningful opportunities for secondary students, focusing on initiatives that support credit accumulation, skill development, and cultural learning. Dedicated student success staffing was added to all secondary schools to address credit accumulation, including expanded summer opportunities for students to rescue credits or earn additional secondary credits through reach-ahead programs.

Collaboration with community and industry partners enhanced experiential learning opportunities for students. Co-operative placements at Dofasco and Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) experiences at Hamilton Healthcare provided engaging, real-world learning. Job skills programs, including Dual Credits, OYAP, and SHSM, were actively promoted through well-attended information evenings, sparking strong interest from students and families.

In alignment with our commitment to Indigenous Education, staff participated in lessons centered on the 13 Moons Teaching Cycle. This sustainable, systemic approach, co-developed with Indigenous partners, deepens understanding of Indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing, and land-based learning. Grounded in lunar and ceremonial calendars, the project launched its first year with a goal of implementing 104 lessons to connect students and staff with Indigenous perspectives.

These concerted efforts have yielded measurable success. Overall, 85% of students are projected to graduate within five years, representing a 1% increase. Additionally, 76% of Grade 10 students are on track to graduate with 16 credits, a significant improvement from 67% the previous year. Participation in job skills programs also saw a remarkable increase, with 39% of students now engaged, up 15% from 2022-2023. These gains reflect the collective commitment of staff, students, and community partners to fostering success and opportunity for all learners.



85% of our students are graduating in 5 years



15% increase in students participating in job skills programs (SHSM, Dual Credits, OYAP) (39%)



9% increase in Grade 10 students 16/q6 credits (76%)



5% increase in Grade 9 students achieved all 8 credits (85%)

WELL-BEING FOR THE FUTURE FOR EVERY STUDENT

In June 2024, staff developed and released the HWDSB Mental Health and Addiction Strategy in alignment with PPM 169, marking a significant step forward in supporting the mental health and well-being of our students and staff. Key highlights of this work include the updated *Reimagining Wellness 3.0*, which was revised based on feedback from both students and staff. This version introduced new lessons on Belonging, Connecting, and Mattering to deepen the focus on fostering a supportive school environment.

Additionally, staff developed and implemented further content aimed at continuing identity-affirming mental health and addiction education, ensuring that students' diverse needs are addressed. Professional learning and capacity-building efforts were centered on the Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness Framework, which includes Indigenous pedagogical approaches and *the Restorative Journey: Indigenous Educational Wellness (OCT)* document. These initiatives support the goals of the Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) 2021-2025 and are a critical part of advancing our commitment to Indigenous education.

A major milestone in this work was the launch of a multi-year project focused on the new Grade 11 NBE3U English course, . This project involved collaboration with eight High School English departments, further strengthening Indigenous learning opportunities within the curriculum.

Moreover, staff continued to offer essential programming aimed at supporting students' mental health and well-being. The Indigenous student leadership and learning community, *Cultivating Community: Reclaiming Our Spaces in Education (CC:ROSE)*, hosted regular meetings and provided leadership development, with students like Rose Shakowennakara:tats stepping into roles such as student leader on the Board of Trustees.

The SKENNEN Program, in partnership with St. Joseph's, presented a two-eyed seeing approach to care, combining traditional teachings with Western clinical psychology and social work practices. This program enabled Indigenous students to access support for anxiety, low mood, stress, and cultural-identity related issues. Participants engaged in weekly sessions over a 10-week period, providing a valuable support network for students facing mental health challenges.

These initiatives represent a holistic, inclusive approach to mental health and wellness, with a strong emphasis on cultural relevance and community support, as we continue to prioritize the well-being of every student.



69% of students said their mental health was 'Good' or 'Very Good to Excellent'.



56% Grade 12 students feel good about being in their school and classrooms.



75% of students who completed the recent School Climate Survey identified they knew where to go for help with how you are feeling.

ENGAGEMENT FOR THE FUTURE FOR EVERY STUDENT

Student engagement is essential to the success of our Board Improvement Plan, and this past year, significant strides were made in furthering our commitment to human rights and equity. Staff updated the Human Rights and Equity Action Plan, completing several key initiatives aimed at fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful school environment.

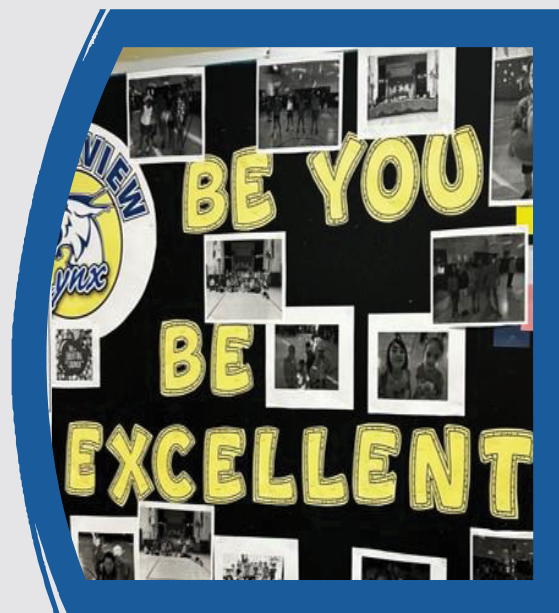
Among these initiatives, we rebranded and relaunched the Responding to Bias, Prejudice, and Hate tool and All Roads Lead to No, two critical resources designed to help staff and students effectively address hate speech, slurs, and other harmful behaviors in school settings. These resources provide proactive strategies for responding to and preventing hate-based incidents, ensuring that our schools remain safe spaces for all.

Additionally, the HWDSB family of schools was equipped with Child and Youth Certified Practitioners (CYCP) and Equity & Well-Being Consultants who provided hands-on support at the classroom level. These professionals worked directly with students and staff, modeling best practices and offering guidance to support the overall well-being and engagement of all learners.

A key addition to this year's efforts was the development of a Human Rights and Hate-Based Incidents Reporting Tool, designed to document human rights barriers and hate-based incidents occurring in schools. This tool will track how schools address incidents and mitigate barriers, ensuring a more transparent and systematic approach to creating inclusive learning environments. Currently being tested, the tool is scheduled for launch in January 2025.

System leaders were also provided with professional learning opportunities to continue promoting a culture of respect for human rights across the board. This training was integral to enhancing our ability to address human rights and hate-based incidents effectively, while fostering a positive, inclusive atmosphere in every school.

These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to creating learning environments where all students feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.



7% increase in students attending school 90% of the time.



67% of Grade 12 students reported on their Exit Survey that they felt welcome in school.



63% of Grade 12 students reported that students from all backgrounds see themselves represented in course materials.



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