

Regional Executive Director's Report to School Communities in the Strait Region

January 2024

As I present my first report for 2024, it is hard to believe we also mark the mid-way of the 2023-2024 school year. To date, we have had a successful school year. As I have shared many times before, it is due to the fact everyone, including students, staff, families and community partners, is helping to ensure a positive and productive year.

Our continued focus is on supporting the goals and strategies identified to improve student well-being and student achievement in math and literacy through the creation of positive, safe and inclusive learning environments, the pillars of the SRCE [System Improvement](#) and [Educational Business Plans](#).

At this time of year, we also turn our attention to upcoming activities including, but not limited to:

SRCE Literacy Month and Family Literacy Day

The SRCE annually designates January as Literacy Month. A literacy campaign was again launched at all schools during the month of January and Family Literacy Day was Saturday, January 27. The campaign is focused on further developing and strengthening students' reading and writing skills at all grade levels and continues throughout the year. Please refer to Page 2 for more details.

Registration for the 2024-2025 School Year

Registration week for Grade Primary and the Pre-primary Program for the 2024-2025 school year was held last week, January 22 to 26, 2024 and continues throughout the year. We encourage families to register children to assist us with school planning and staffing for the 2024-2025 school year. Please refer to Page 3 for more information.

Final Assessment Week

Final assessment week in high schools was held from January 25 to 30, 2024. We wish students success and thank staff for preparing students for their assessments.

February is African Heritage Month 2024: Our Smiles, Our Joy, Our Resilience as African Nova Scotians

We look forward to sharing the celebrations to mark this month at schools in the SRCE. Stay tuned for more highlights through school and SRCE social media and in my February Report to school communities.

Most of all, I want families to know we are here to support you. I encourage anyone who needs more support or has questions to reach out to their school so staff may provide assistance and/or connect you with the right help. As always, I encourage you to watch for information on our school and regional celebrations in print, on our website, www.srce.ca and X (formerly Twitter), [@SRCE_NS](https://twitter.com/SRCE_NS).

Sincerely,

Paul Landry
Regional Executive Director of Education



Paul Landry
Regional Executive Director
of Education

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Upcoming Dates/Events

February
African Heritage Month 2024

February 5 to 9, 2024
Canadian School Counselling Week

Thursday, February 15, 2024
National Flag of Canada Day

Monday, February 19, 2024
Heritage Day Holiday

Transportation (Busing) Inquiries

For questions related to busing, bus stops and/or bus routes, please contact SRCE Transportation by email at transportation@srce.ca or by phone at 902-747-3645.

For busing emergencies, please contact SRCE Transportation staff by phone at 902-747-3642 (6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

Who Do I Contact with 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 Manager of Pre-primary Programs at carolyn.webber@srce.ca.
- 3 For general inquiries, please contact the SRCE where we will be happy to connect you with the right member of staff: 902-625-2191 / srce@srce.ca.
- 4 For all other matters and media inquiries, please contact Deanna Gillis, Coordinator of Communications by phone at 902-625-7093 or by email at deanna.gillis@srce.ca.



Strait Regional Centre for Education
304 Pitt Street, Unit 2
Port Hawkesbury, NS B9A 2T9;
www.srce.ca; srce@srce.ca;
(902) 625-2191/
1-800-650-4448 (P)
(902) 625-2281 (F)



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SRCE Launches Annual Literacy Month Campaign and Celebrates Family Literacy Day

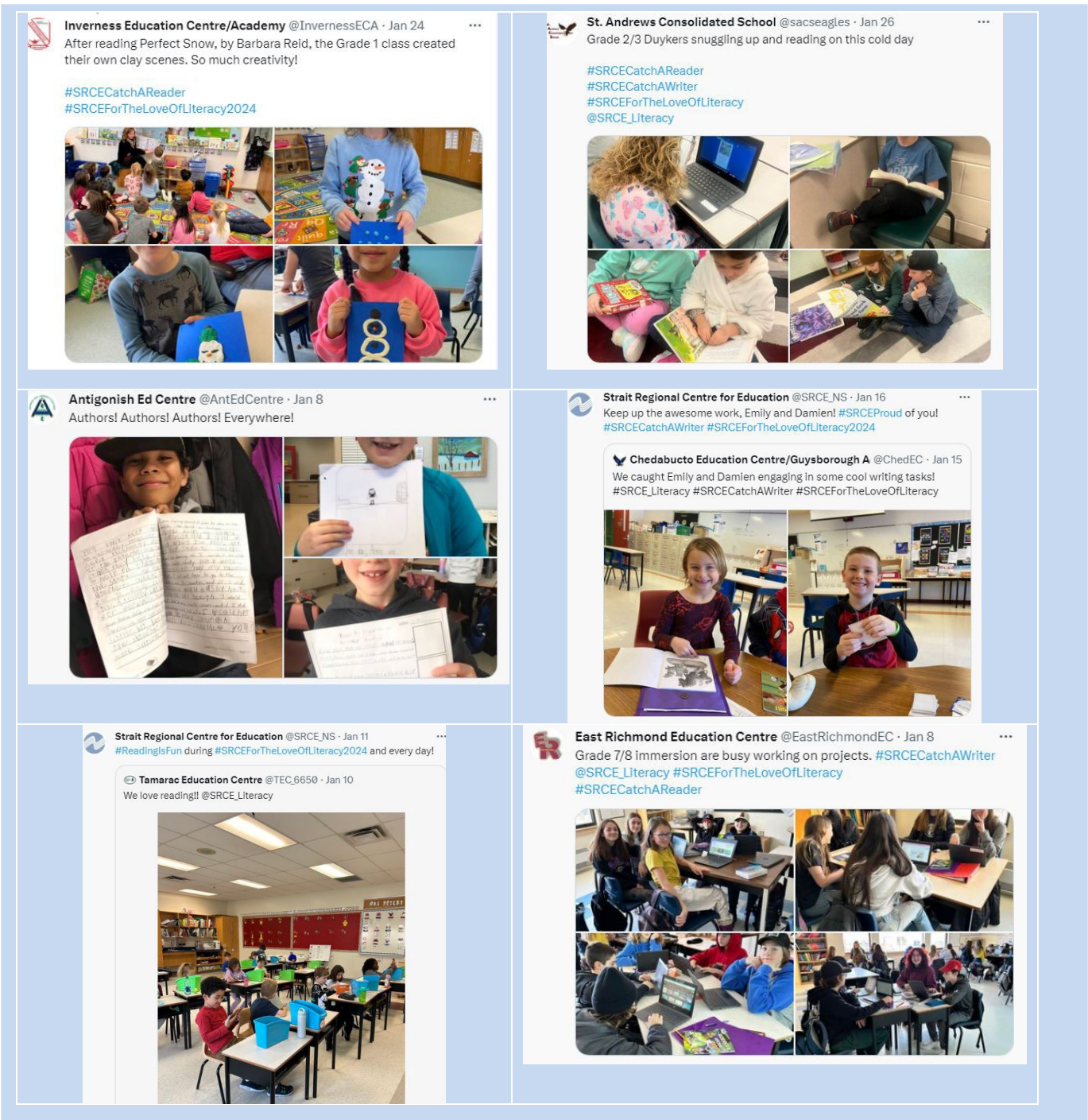
The SRCE annually designates January as Literacy Month. Under the leadership of Tanya Carter, Coordinator of Literacy, a literacy campaign was again launched at all schools during the month of January and Family Literacy Day was Saturday, January 27. The campaign is focused on further developing and strengthening students' reading and writing skills at all grade levels and continues throughout the year.

Literacy skills are essential for lifelong success. Encouraging reading and writing in school and together as a family helps students develop good listening, speaking, vocabulary and language skills, imagination and creativity, and contributes to their future success and well-being.



Literacy instruction is a priority for all students in the SRCE, across all subjects and grade levels. In addition to school-based staff, Programs and Student Services staff, including but not limited to SchoolsPlus personnel, Speech-Language Pathologists, and English as an Additional Language teachers, have an integral role in developing literacy learning of students through in-class programming. Further, the goal of improving student achievement in literacy is one of the main goals included in the SRCE's System Improvement Plan for 2023-2024. The Plan focuses on goals and priorities to address the needs of all learners in the SRCE. For more information, please access the complete plan at [SRCE System Improvement Plan for 2023-2024](#), and access the infographic at [SRCE System Improvement Plan 2023-2024 Infographic](#).

Please join us to make reading, writing and learning together part of our everyday activities in and out of the classroom.



School Registration for Grade Primary and the Pre-primary Program for the 2024-2025 School Year

Although registration week was held last week, families wishing to register children for the Pre-primary Program and Grade Primary in both English and French Immersion for September 2024 may do so at any time by contacting their local elementary school.

Please refer to the following links for additional details:

[Registration for Pre-primary Programs](#)

[Registration for Grade Primary in English and French Immersion](#)



**Strait**
Regional Centre for Education

School Registration Information
2024-2025 School Year

Registration for Pre-primary Programs and Grade Primary takes place during the week of January 22 to 26, 2024.

Please help us plan for the upcoming school year by registering your child.



Did You Know?

- ✓ In the SRCE, busing is available to all pre-primary children eligible to receive bus service. Please contact the SRCE Transportation Department staff by email at transportation@srce.ca or by phone at 902-747-3645 to determine your eligibility to receive bus service.

SchoolsPlus Programs, Services and Supports Available to all Students in the SRCE

In the SRCE, we have been very fortunate that all students and families in all schools have access to programs, services and supports provided by our SchoolsPlus staff.

SchoolsPlus staff are dedicated to supporting students' achievement, well-being and overall success in and out of school. They are helping our children, youth and families connect to a range of programs by working and collaborating with school staff and multiple partners and service providers. This model is very much a collaborative one with all partners working closely together to support our students and families. Community partnerships are an integral component of the success of the SchoolsPlus programs in the Strait Region. In the SRCE, there are six SchoolsPlus hub sites. Each of these hub sites offer a range of different programs, services and supports based on the particular needs of the students and families. Examples of some of the programs offered by SchoolsPlus staff focus on recreation, health relationships, violence awareness and prevention, anger management and restorative practices, personal health and fitness.

For contact information, please access the [SchoolsPlus page](#) on the SRCE website.

School Advisory Council Professional Development Session

SRCE regional staff, school administrators and Chairpersons/representatives from our School Advisory Councils attended a virtual professional development session on Wednesday, January 17, 2024.

I would like to thank all those who attended the session. The session was very well attended and is indicative of the great support SACs provide to our students, families and schools. The agenda included the following topics:

- Review of Role and Responsibilities for SACs
- Strengthening Local Voices in Public Education
- Student Success Planning
- International Student Program

I would like to acknowledge the work and commitment of the members of our SACs who generously share their time and talents to support our students' well-being, achievement and success.

For more information about SACs and the important and valuable role they fulfill, please refer to the following link:

[School Advisory Council \(SAC\) Information](#)

Welcome

**SRCE School Advisory Council
Session – January 17, 2024**

S.A.C.

School Advisory Council



GET INVOLVED

www.srce.ca



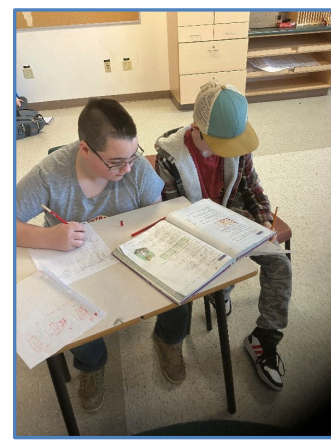
As I shared in my October RED Report, as part of input received through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's [Ideas for Education](#) initiative, the SRCE is piloting several projects to help improve student achievement and outcomes. In this month's report, I am pleased to highlight two more of the pilots

Elementary Math Specialist Pilot

This year, the SRCE designated two positions as Elementary Math Specialist positions. These two staff members have a math-specific training background and/or extensive experience teaching mathematics and are teaching multiple grade levels. In addition to their hands-on focused teaching of math, they will also be collecting data to monitor the students' progress, including student attitudes toward mathematics, report card progress and provincial math assessment results.

Colleen MacDougall is teaching Grades 4 and 6 math at St. Andrews Consolidated School and her passion for math is evident in the way she works with students and the set-up of her classroom. During the 'soft start' of the school's morning routines, students have the opportunity to work on a math activity such as tangram puzzles. This is a great way to introduce math to students as a leisure activity. Ms. MacDougall has embraced the Building Thinking Classroom teaching strategies by organizing her classroom for small group problem-solving with whiteboard spaces around the perimeter. She regularly presents students with challenging problems and the students develop the attitude that struggle is productive and is a pathway to understanding.

Blake MacPherson is teaching both Grade 6 and Grade 11 math at Richmond Education Centre/Academy. As such, Mr. MacPherson knows the important math skills Grade 6 students will need as they progress through their school years. Important criteria for success include building foundational skills and developing perseverance. Mr. MacPherson is working with students to develop positive attitudes towards math problem-solving. In a recent survey of students, they revealed their confidence is growing: the majority of students feel that everyone can do well in math; they are willing to try difficult problems independently before seeking help; making mistakes in math is natural process for learning, and they are willing to keep trying. In addition, Mr. MacPherson is incorporating the Knowledgehook Program in his teaching practice as a tool for assessment.



New Teacher Mentorship Program

As part of the New Teacher Mentorship Program, all new teachers in the SRCE are assigned a teacher mentor to support them in their new assignments during their first year of teaching. In addition, new teachers attend three training sessions that include the following areas:

- an overall orientation;
- assessment, evaluation and teaching standards;
- classroom management and instructional strategies;
- human resources and associated policies; and
- student services and technology integration.

Mentors for new teachers play an important role in supporting them in their new roles and become effective educators supporting student well-being, achievement and success.

When I was asked to be a mentor, I jumped at the opportunity. Although I haven't been a "new" teacher in a long time, I know how important it is to have someone you can turn to for various types of support. With Chelsea, I do classroom visits; and I assist her in instructional growth and with classroom management. I meet with her at least once a month to discuss how she is doing and what support she may need. Being a mentor reminds me of why I became an educator.

- Nicolle MacIntyre, School Counsellor, Tamarac Education Centre



Chelsea MacLeod, Teacher, and Nicolle MacIntyre, Teacher Mentor and School Counsellor, Tamarac Education Centre (left to right).

Starting at a new school and a new career can be challenging. Having a mentor who I can go to when I have any questions or concerns has made it much easier. I have been able to go to Nicolle for support for multiple things, such as classroom management, students who need extra support, using the online programs to find information I need, and any questions I have on how to best support my students. Having a Mentor as a first-year permanent teacher not only benefits me, but benefits students as well.

- Chelsea MacLeod, Teacher, Tamarac Education Centre

The overarching goal of the 2023-2024 [SRCE System Improvement Plan](#) and [Educational Business Plan](#) is student well-being and specifically *to foster student well-being through the creation of positive, safe, equitable and inclusive learning environments.*

The Strait Regional Centre for Education is always striving to enhance student well-being and promote a healthy, safe, equitable and inclusive learning environment. The initiatives and programs highlighted below reflect a commitment to supporting diverse aspects of student life including physical health, mental health and well-being, cultural awareness and success.

School Food

The Strait Regional Centre for Education maintains a sustained focus on school food initiatives, introducing Fresh Food Carts, breakfast, snack and milk programs to ensure students have access to nutritious meals throughout the day. We are currently piloting the Fresh Food Cart project at eight schools and the feedback has been positive from both students and staff. In addition, SchoolsPlus staff provide ongoing support for food security of students/families through a number of initiatives.

Student Focus Groups

Through the work of Health Promoting Schools and the Student Equity Consultant, there has been continued implementation of Student Focus Groups which allows students to voice their opinions and share feedback on wellness initiatives which is fostering a student-centred approach to decision-making.

Health Promoting Schools School-Based Teams

In partnership with Nova Scotia Health, Youth Health Centre Coordinator positions have been implemented in several schools. Their role is to enhance access to health services and contribute to overall student well-being. The establishment of Health Promoting Schools School-based Teams, led by Child and Youth Care Practitioners (CYCPs) and Youth Health Centre Coordinators (YHCCs) focus on receiving input from students on how to support their well-being needs including ways to promote healthy eating, physical activity, inclusion, equity and student engagement in their schools.

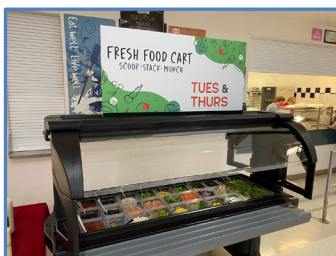
Programming and Resources

Active Smarter Kids (ASK) is a model for curriculum delivery that involves the incorporation of simple physical activities into the delivery of academic lessons. ASK lessons are usually delivered outdoors but can also take place indoors. Research demonstrates that movement will indeed improve memory tasks, enhance student engagement and improve academic achievement among our students. It also provides an opportunity for teachers to teach, coach and support students in various settings and learning environments by adding some movement to the school day experience.

Adaptive Physical Education Programs are being re-introduced as part of the implementation of the provincial **Physical Activity Framework**. In addition, programs are being implemented at various grade levels including **Restorative Approaches in Schools, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Kids in the Know** and **Healthy Relationships for Youth**, as well as **Anti-Racism Education workshops**. These programs contribute to fostering a positive and supportive school culture that supports student well-being. In addition, **Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA)** committees have been established at many schools.

Students in Grades 4 to 12 complete the provincial **Student Success Survey** annually. An analysis of the survey occurs at both school and regional levels to help identify trends and areas of need to inform targeted interventions to support student well-being.

As part of our ongoing implementation of the **Inclusive Education Policy**, learning resources that reflect the diversity of students are regularly distributed to schools to support the well-being and achievement of every student in safe, equitable learning environments.

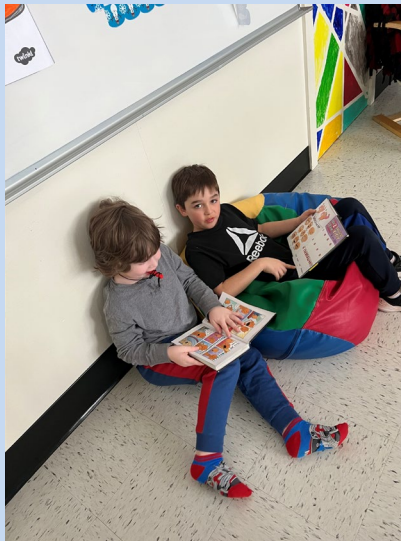




Students at Dalbrae Academy use their literacy skills to find reading clues during a scavenger hunt,



Students at Pleasant Bay School took part in a Cozy Up and Read Day as part of the school's literacy celebrations.



Chief Annie Daisley from We'koqma'q First Nation was a guest reader at Whycomomagh Education Centre as part of the celebrations for Literacy Month.



Students at Cape Breton Highlands Education Centre/Academy took part in a Cozy Up and Read Day as part of the school's literacy celebrations.



Winter has arrived. This is the time of year for parents and guardians to review their backup plan with their children in the event there are decisions made to delay or cancel bus service or classes due to weather and/or road conditions.

Please make sure your current contact information (email address and cell phone) is on file at your student's school.

Our preference is always to have our students in school. We recognize that parents and guardians are concerned when their children miss class time, and we share this concern. That is why our decision to cancel classes is not made lightly and is made with the safety of students and staff as the first priority.

The vast majority of our students are bused to school and our region covers a very large geographic area of 11,000 sq. km. Due to our large geographic region, it is very important that we gather information from many sources beginning very early in the morning, around 5:00 a.m., to enable us to make an informed decision and announce it prior to 6:30 a.m., to the degree possible, to help families plan accordingly.

The Decision-Making Process

The Strait Regional Centre for Education follows a comprehensive decision-making process and detailed procedures to make decisions resulting in delays or cancellations to bus service or classes in school(s). Our decision-making process includes consultations with, and a review of information from, the following:

- The SRCE Manager of Transportation and Director of Operations;
- Staff who personally travel on the roads early in the morning evaluating road and weather conditions;
- Weather forecasting services including Environment Canada, WOOD Weather Information System, and The Weather Network;
- Local region contacts (school bus drivers);
- Neighbouring Regional Centres for Education;
- Provincial highway cameras;
- The Nova Scotia Department of Public Works; and
- RCMP, if required.

There are six possible phases of cancellations:

Phase I: Cancellation of a Bus Run or Runs

Phase II: Cancellation of Bus Service on Unpaved Roads

Phase III: Cancellation of Classes due to Inclement Weather

Phase IV: Delayed Opening of Schools

Phase V: Early Dismissal: Predicted and Deteriorating Weather/Road Conditions During the Day

Phase VI: Partial or Complete System Shutdown/Schools and Buildings Closed

How to Stay Informed

You are encouraged to check all available information sources as noted below to ensure you are up to date regarding class and bus service announcements:

- Check our website, www.srce.ca and specifically the [Cancellations and Announcements](#) image on the main page of the website. Please note there are two tabs on this page, School and Worksite Cancellations and Announcements are found under the first tab at the bottom of the page and Bus Route Cancellations and Announcements are found under the second tab.
- Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) at [@SRCE_NS](#).
- Listen to local radio stations.
- Subscribe to receive class cancellation and/or bus route notices via email and/or text at https://www.srce.ca/news/stay_informed.

Contact Information

- Transportation Department Staff: 902-747-3645; 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. / transportation@srce.ca
- Operations Centre Dispatch Staff: 902-747-3642; 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Emergency Busing Phone Number: 902-747-3642; 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



Did You Know?

- ✓ SRCE Transportation staff may be contacted by email at transportation@srce.ca or by phone at 902-747-3645.
- ✓ The school bus emergency phone number is 902-747-3642 (6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

Join the SRCE Team

The Strait Regional Centre for Education is currently accepting Expressions of Interest for potential early hire term teaching contracts for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Qualified teachers, or those who will be qualified by September 1, 2024, are invited to apply online for the following Expression of Interest postings:

- [Mathematics](#);
- [Science](#);
- [French](#);
- [Equity](#) and
- [Grades Primary to 12 Multi-Subject \(Posted by County\)](#)



Join our Team!

The SRCE invites expressions of interest for potential early hire term teaching contracts for the 2024-2025 school year for the following Expression of Interest postings:

- Mathematics;
- Science;
- French;
- Equity; and
- Grades Primary to 12 Multi-Subject (Posted by County)

◆ There is no team like the SRCE TEAM! ◆

Learn more and apply today:
<https://srce.ca/>
<https://jobs.ednet.ns.ca>

Those selected as Early Hires will be offered a minimum of one year, fixed, 100% term contract, with associated salary and benefits. For more information, please contact the SRCE Human Resources Department at 902-625-7081.

SafeArrival Implementation Update

As I mentioned in my October 2023 Report, to enhance the existing safe arrival process for reporting student absences from school, we are implementing a new, more efficient student absence reporting system called **SafeArrival**.

This new system will help improve student safety, reduce the time it takes to verify student attendance, make it easy for you to report your student's absence and easy for staff to respond to unexplained student absences.

With **SafeArrival**, parents and guardians will be asked to report your student's absence in advance using any of the following convenient methods:

1. **Mobile Device (Using the free SchoolMessenger App)**
2. **SchoolMessenger (SafeArrival) Website**
3. **Interactive Toll-free Phone Number**

To date, we have implemented SafeArrival in five (5) schools. More information will be shared with families by your respective school when implementation of the SafeArrival system is scheduled.



Strait Regional Centre for Education

SafeArrival

Student Absence Reporting System

A new way to report student absences from school.

Invitation to Become a Host Family in the SRCE



BRING THE WORLD HOME

When you host an international student you may be surprised at how your family will grow

Visit nsisp.ca/become-host-family for more information on how to become an NSISP host family

Nova Scotia International Student Program

The SRCE continues to recruit families to host international students.

Welcome the world into your home by hosting an international student. Become a host family and create friends for life.

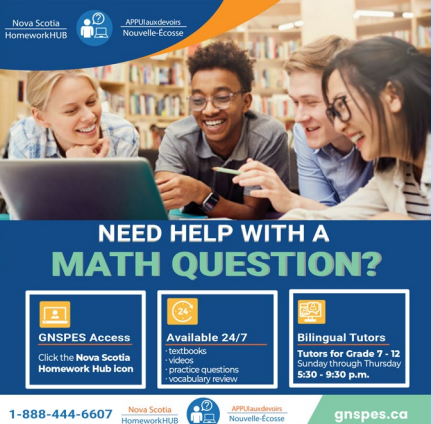
You will be surprised at the many ways your family grows when you become a host family.

Your hospitality can make all the difference to a student's experience, and it is our hope that by becoming a host family, it will mark the beginning of a relationship that will last a lifetime!

Learn more about this exciting opportunity at <https://nsisp.ca/become-host-family>.

For more information about becoming a host family in the SRCE, please contact:

Chris Penny, Manager, SRCE-ISP
chris.penny@srce.ca; 902-631-5170



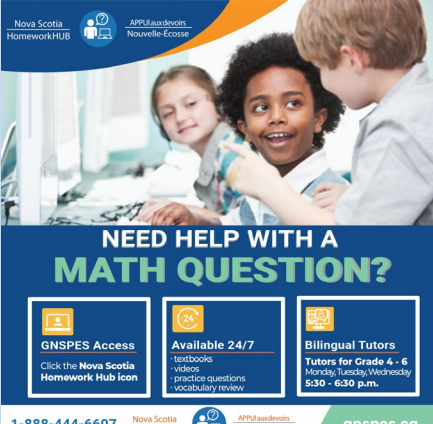
Nova Scotia HomeworkHUB

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NEED HELP WITH A MATH QUESTION?

- GNSPES Access**
Click the Nova Scotia Homework Hub Icon
- Available 24/7**
textbooks
videos
practice questions
vocabulary review
- Bilingual Tutors**
Tutors for Grade 7 - 12
Sunday through Thursday
5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

1-888-444-6607 Nova Scotia HomeworkHUB APP | Audio/vidéo Nouvelle-Écosse gnspe.ca



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Tutors for Grade 4 - 6
Monday, Tuesday/Wednesday
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

1-888-444-6607 Nova Scotia HomeworkHUB APP | Audio/vidéo Nouvelle-Écosse gnspe.ca