

2023-2024
Annual School Development Report

Horizon Academy



Horizon Academy

*Nurturing Strength & Hope
Through Community*

School's Vision:

Nurturing Strength and Hope Through Community!

School's Mission:

Horizon Academy will encourage student growth in a respectful, safe and caring learning environment.

Horizon Academy (HA) is located on 145 St. Clare Avenue in St. John's, NL. It is a registered alternative transitional school housed under the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. The school's intent is to offer alternate programming to junior high and high school aged students whose learning is not conducive to their zoned school setting. An application must be completed by the zoned school to seek placement. Currently there are 5 teaching staff, 1 itinerant teacher (deployed to other schools via a community outreach educational model), a half time school counsellor, 1 custodian, 1 secretary, 1 child and youth care worker, and 1 principal.

The school is considered a mental health and behavioral facility. The student population ranges from 40 to 60 students. A safe and caring, non-judgmental, respectful learning environment is provided for all students who attend Horizon Academy. Typically, students work on 2-4 courses along with social emotional learning skills (i.e. social skills, life skills, self-regulation, self-advocacy skills) during their stay at HA. The ratio of students to teachers is low, which allows students to develop positive relationships with teaching staff in a strongly supported learning environment. When students are ready to transition back to a regular school setting, staff begin the transition process back to the zoned school or the T.I. Murphy Centre.

Horizon Academy has large classrooms, a library, a full size gym, an outdoor park area with gardening bins, and a basketball court behind the school. We also house a Brilliant Labs MakerSpace which our students have access to. We also participate in the Kids Eat Smart Program and have many partnerships with outside communities such as Eastern Health CONNECT, Thrive, Amal, Choices for Youth, Hope Valley, and the Tuckamore Centre.

Strategic Issue/Goal: To Create an Optimal Environment Where All Students are Engaged and Learning.

Objective: to encourage student belonging and a feeling of safety through establishing and nurturing positive relationships at Horizon Academy.

How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?

- Students have often reported feeling “lost” in their previous school setting when they arrive at HA, and that they were lacking connections to their previously zoned school.
- Students expressed an interest in wanting to work collaboratively and develop relationships with the other class groups here at HA for some larger deep learning projects involving all students working together.
- Some families indicated that they were struggling financially at home, and that it had impacted the ability to get their children to our building. This was looked at as a potential barrier to them developing a positive connection to HA.
- Students express interest in availing of our ABC Points/Rewards PBS system, wherein they have the opportunity to earn points daily (via attendance, positive behavioural interactions with others, and completion of assigned work) which they can put toward earning a variety of reward items.

Year-end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?

- A safe and caring, supportive building helps them feel nurtured and respected - our students revealed they felt better about attending here, and felt a renewed sense of belonging.
- Daily check-ins take place with all students in order to ensure their needs are met.
- Information sessions on Healthy Relationships were provided by Planned Parenthood, and attended by both staff and students.
- Collaborative project opportunities were provided throughout the year, where all students and staff would get together and work on a project (i.e. pumpkin carving/decorating, poppy rock painting done in collaboration with St. Theresas, baking activities via Nutrition courses, various MakerSpace activities)
- Bringing in outside agencies to help with positive mental health supports that increase the students feeling of safety and belonging here at HA (i.e. weekly visits from St. John Ambulance therapy dogs, Rainbow Riders Equine Therapy program in the Spring, U-Turn Addictions Centre presentation, as well as Choices for Youth community services presentation)
- Funding from a variety of organizations has been donated to our building to help the families of our students financially (i.e. Steers funding families for Christmas, ongoing donations from various agencies to our ABC Points Program, vegetable donations for Christmas Hampers). These initiatives help foster a strong relationship between HA and our students and their families, and the community.

Next Steps...

- We will continue with providing a respectful and caring learning and daily living space for our students, by checking in with them regularly for feedback.
- We want them to feel hope and maximize their potential in learning and achievement at Horizon Academy.
- We will continue to engage in our social and emotional learning competencies to offer guidance when being in the outside world.
- We will continue to work with our outreach worker to provide outside opportunities of support.
- Continued exploration of full time programming for those who are regulated and have the readiness to attend full time programming.

Strategic Issue/ Goal: To Improve Responsive Teaching and Learning in the Classroom via Our Instructional Practices

Objective: To increase student engagement by incorporating their interests and abilities into our every day instructional practices.

How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?

- Our students come with various backgrounds and educational abilities and skills. We wanted to find a method that was responsive to all needs with all students despite their various knowledge bases. Deep Learning and Passion Projects that develop global competencies of collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication, citizenship, and character.
- We wanted to provide flexible scheduling offering workplace and outside life opportunities along with encouraging individualized paced learning.
- Many of our students report having a low sense of confidence in their ability to be successful at school.
- Our students often present various complex needs, and have reported that they feel school hasn't provided them with an opportunity to convey knowledge about their own personal interests and skill sets.

Year-end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?

- Deep learning projects were implemented and shared with the school population to get students thinking outside of the box when

it comes to their learning.

- A community gardening deep learning project has been ongoing inside and outside of classes all year.
- Our outreach worker assists students with outside life skills and counselling/access to community supports, as needed.
- We developed a hydroponics program in one of our classrooms to explore a student's interest in gardening. This then became a group deep learning project that the whole class was able to take part in.
- We formed a partnership with Melissa Lee of BrilliantLabs wherein a student from Horizon partnered up with a student from Gonzaga for some science-based experiments/projects.
- We engaged a partnership with Circus NL who worked with our students to provide real life learning opportunities within the fields of Science and Social Studies via participating in a variety of circus acts.
- We engaged in a partnership with St. Theresa's school whereby we fostered a deep learning project around Remembrance Day. This allowed our students to feel empowered and confident by sharing their work with those other than their own age groups.

Next Steps:

- Our deep learning and passion projects will continue into the 2024-2025 school year. Our goal is to instruct students together in these projects versus all subject based learning. Our goal is to share our learning experiences with all teachers and students here at HA, so that we encourage a team approach to learning.
- We continue to explore other potential avenues for collaboration with outside agencies that can help our students foster a sense of confidence in their ability to succeed at school. Our next steps involve looking into options for apprenticeship type opportunities for students who are interested in availing of some hands-on work experience supplementary to their in-person learning with us.
- We have begun to explore the ways in which standards based assessment can be considered going forward here at HA. This work will be ongoing as we navigate it as a school community.