

Saint Mary's Elementary School
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(902) 421-6749
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<https://smr.hrce.ca/>

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Saint Mary's Elementary School

November 2025 Newsletter

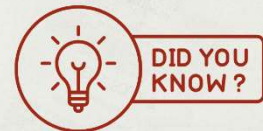
Hello Saint Mary's Families,

As we begin November, the end of the first term is quickly approaching. Teachers are busy gathering evidence of student learning and preparing Report Cards. They will be reaching out to parents and caregivers directly to schedule Learning Progress Conferences, which will take place on **December 3 and 4**. If you're unavailable on those dates, please feel free to contact your child's teacher to arrange an alternative time.

As Term 1 wraps up, I want to emphasize how important regular attendance and punctuality are to your child's success. Our specialist classes and intervention supports—such as EAL, Literacy, and Resource—begin promptly at **9:00 a.m.** Extended absences and lateness mean students miss these valuable learning opportunities, which can lead to gaps in their progress. We will continue to connect with families whose children have missed more than 10% of classes. If there's anything we can do to support your family in getting your child to school on time, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Finally, we're excited to begin preparations for our **Holiday Concert**, scheduled for **Thursday, December 4**. More information and tickets will be sent home later this month.

Ms. Johnson
Acting Principal



Ensuring regular attendance is a joint effort between students, families and schools.

What can you do?

- ✓ Monitor and encourage punctual, consistent attendance
- ✓ Maintain open communication with the school when absences or challenges arise
- ✓ Work with school staff to understand supports or accommodations for your child
- ✓ Be aware of the attendance thresholds and possible consequences

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Important Dates

- **Friday, Nov. 7:** Photo Retakes & Class Photos
- **Monday, Nov. 10:** Remembrance Day Assembly, Cadets/Guides/Scouts can wear their uniforms
- **Tuesday, Nov. 11:** Remembrance Day – no classes PP-12
- **Tuesday, Nov. 18:** SAC Meeting @ 6pm (virtual)
- **Friday, Nov 21:** Assessment & Evaluation Day- no classes PP-9
- **Monday, Dec 1:** Report Cards sent home by email
- **Wednesday Dec. 3:** Learning Conferences (evening)
- **Thursday, Dec. 4:** Learning Conferences – no classes
Holiday Concert (evening)
- **December 3-5:** Book Fair

Life at Saint Mary's

- Students enjoyed our first school-wide assembly hosted by our Grade 6 leaders on Friday, Oct 31! We are looking forward to our Remembrance Day Assembly on Nov. 10.
- Classes are planning to visit the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia this fall! We will be looking for chaperones to come along with us!
- Several classes have been working with Ms. Ledger, the Halifax Regional Arts Fine Art Specialist. We can't wait to see their creations!
- We will be replacing some of the outdoor furniture thanks to the Youth Engagement Project Grant.

Healthy Eating at School

We have noticed that many students are bringing candy and treats to school and are eating these first thing in the morning or instead of a proper snack or lunch. We teach students about healthy eating throughout the year but we would appreciate your help in reinforcing healthy eating habits at home and by encouraging students to save treats for after lunch.

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Hungry for something fun? Check out the Nova Scotia school lunch cookbook!

Hungry for something fun? Get cooking with the new cookbook *What's for Lunch? Nova Scotia Recipes to Cook and Enjoy Together*, a joyful collection of most-loved recipes from school food programs.

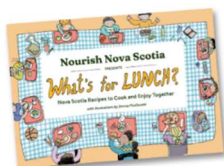
Proceeds from the sale of this book go directly to supporting school healthy eating programs in Nova Scotia, such as breakfast and snack, cooking clubs and school gardens. Learn more and order yours [here](#).



Cook up your favourite school meals at home

with Nourish Nova Scotia's new cookbook!

Within its pages, you'll find easy recipes, meet inspiring lunch heroes, explore local ingredients, and enjoy bite-sized food facts.



All proceeds from the sale of this cookbook will support food programs in Nova Scotia schools.



Whether you're a new cook, a young chef, or a family learning together in the kitchen, *What's for Lunch?* invites you to bake up a handmade pizza, create a picnic plate, make a big batch of breakfast sandwiches, or stir up some butter chicken! Each easy-to-follow recipe comes with tasty ideas for toppings, sides, and simple swaps to make it just right for you and your family.

Within its pages, you will meet some of the inspiring folks behind Nova Scotia's made-from-scratch school lunches, explore where local food ingredients come from, and discover bite-sized fun facts to spark curiosity. Colourful illustrations by students at Oxford School in Halifax and beloved local illustrator Emma FitzGerald bring it all to life!

Photo Consent Forms

The HRCE Demographic Update Form includes a section for **Consent for the Publication of Photos**. If you did not complete the form, it means you have **not provided consent** for your child to be photographed, and they **cannot be included** in any class pictures.

A hard copy of the consent form is being sent home with students whose online forms were not received. Please complete and return the form to your child's teacher as soon as possible.

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School Advisory Council

School Advisory Councils (SACs) play an important role in supporting student success at the school community level. An SAC is an advisory body to the school principal and the Regional Centre for Education (HRCE), on a range of issues related to the school and the school system.



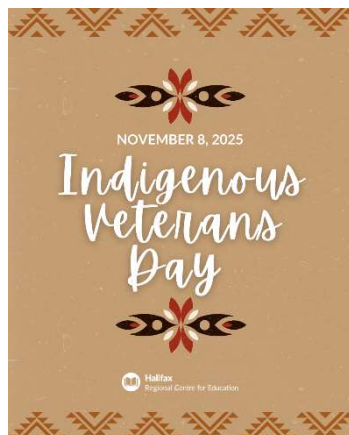
Our next SAC Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 18 at 6:00pm via Microsoft Teams**. Please reach out to Emily.johnson@hrce.ca or hrce-sac-smr@gnsps.ca if you are interested in joining or would like to share your thoughts!

November 11 is Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day holds an important place in our schools as it provides a meaningful opportunity for our students to learn about the sacrifices made by veterans and all those who have served in times of conflict. Through ceremonies, discussions and creative projects, we demonstrate respect and gratitude for the freedoms Canadians enjoy. Observing Remembrance Day also helps students connect with Canada's history and reinforces the values of peace, tolerance and community responsibility.



November 8 is Indigenous Veterans Day



Indigenous Veterans Day is an important occasion to honour the sacrifices and contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. Recognizing this day in schools is especially significant, as it provides students with the opportunity to learn about the often-overlooked histories and experiences of Indigenous veterans. By commemorating Indigenous Veterans Day in our schools, we ensure that younger generations understand the vital role Indigenous peoples have played in defending Canada, while also promoting respect, reconciliation, and a more inclusive

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understanding of Canadian history. This recognition helps strengthen empathy, respect for diversity and a greater appreciation for the many ways in which Indigenous peoples have shaped our country.

November 13-19 is Transgender Awareness Week

Transgender Awareness Week provides an important opportunity to strengthen understanding and respect for the transgender community, to encourage inclusivity in our schools and to promote safe environments where all students feel valued and supported. Learn more [here](#).



Learning more about the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

Did you know? [The Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#) guides our approach to attendance and is in place to support all students.

The policy states that regular, punctual attendance supports academic success, responsibility, and preparation for the future.

Ensuring regular attendance is a joint effort between students, families and schools. As a parent/guardian, you play an important role by monitoring attendance, communicating with the school when your child is absent, and supporting your child's regular attendance.

What Should You Know?

- **Communication about absences**
 - Schools will monitor attendance and lateness.
 - All absences must be communicated to the school, following the school's procedure.
 - If absenteeism or lateness reaches 10% of class time, the school will begin to engage more actively with the student and family.
 - If it goes beyond 15%, more targeted supports may be used (counselling, referrals, community supports).
- **High school credit requirement**
 - For Grades 10–12, students must attend at least 80% of class time to earn the credit.

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- If more than 20% of class time is missed, and efforts to improve attendance haven't succeeded, the teacher may recommend "loss of credit." The principal makes the final decision.

What Can You Do?

- Monitor and encourage punctual, consistent attendance
- Maintain open communication with the school when absences or challenges arise
- Work with school staff to understand supports or accommodations for your child
- Be aware of the thresholds (10%, 15%) and possible consequences (intervention, loss of credit in high school)
- Remember: the policy allows flexibility. If your child has a legitimate reason for missing school (health, family issue, etc.), schools are encouraged to take a supportive approach.

Planning for Inclement Weather

Did you know? HRCE takes great care when making the decision to alter the regular operations of schools and school buses in the event of severe or inclement weather. It is HRCE's goal to communicate any changes to the regular operations of schools and/or buses as close to 6:00 a.m. as possible. **A 6:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- All schools are delayed in opening by two hours and bus pickups are delayed by two hours; or
- All schools are open, but some or all busses are not operating for the day; or
- Some schools (either individually or by family) are closed for the day; or
- All schools are closed for the day.

If weather deteriorates, or is forecasted to worsen throughout the morning, **an 11:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- Bussed students will be picked up two hours earlier than their regular dismissal time; and
- Walking students will be dismissed at their regularly scheduled lunch hour.



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How will I find out?

- By email to the addresses in PowerSchool
- By text message, **if you have opted-in**. If you aren't sure if you have opted-in, text Y to the following number: **978338**
- [On the HRCE website](#)
- [On Instagram](#)

It's important to always have a plan in place for childcare in the event of any cancellation. Please remember: As a parent or guardian you always have the choice of whether or not to send your child to school.

For more information on how HRCE manages during inclement weather, visit hrce.ca/families/cancellations.

Supporting Students and Families: Unplugged Canada Resources!

Please note: this includes an event taking place Nov. 2.

Unplugged Canada is a parent-led, national movement advocating for healthier childhoods by delaying smartphones and social media until kids are developmentally ready. Parents and caregivers are invited to explore resources, take the [pledge](#) to delay, and join upcoming parent events at unpluggedcanada.com.

The local Nova Scotia chapter is hosting a free community event for parents, caregivers and educators.

Unplugged Together: Raising Connected Kids in a Digital World

Learn about the latest research on how smartphones are impacting kids, safer alternatives to consider and tools to navigate the digital world with your family.

Hammonds Plains Community Centre (virtual/zoom option available)

Sunday, November 2, 2025

6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Register: <https://UnpluggedTogether.eventbrite.ca>

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING

A QUICK GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND
GUARDIANS IN HRCE



WHAT IS AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) means computers that can learn from information and find patterns to help make decisions. AI doesn't think or feel like people—it uses data to make connections that led to informed responses.

HOW IS AI USED IN SCHOOLS?

- Teachers choose if and how AI is used in the classroom.
- Some lessons may include AI tools for learning or creativity.
- Students learn how to use technology safely and responsibly.



HOW AI CAN HELP LEARNING?

AI can:

- Give students quick feedback.
- Help with idea generation when a child is stuck.
- Adjust lessons to fit different learning needs.
- Change reading levels of text so it is more easily accessible.



Remember, teachers will always tell students when they can or cannot use AI for school work.

AI PRIVACY AND SAFETY TIPS:

- Never share personal info with AI tools.
- Only use apps approved by your school or regional centre.
- Look closely at the age restrictions of AI tools.
- Talk with your child about what's real, what's private, and what's fair online.



AT HOME YOU CAN HELP BY:

- Setting screen time limits and tech-free times.
- Talking about what your child does online.
- Reminding your child to check if AI answers make sense.
- Asking teachers about the AI usage guidelines.
- Reviewing classroom/school academic integrity guidelines.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Scan the QR code for a list of approved learning tools and information about technology in education.



Halifax
Regional Centre for Education

