

It is a pleasure to share with you our Community Schools and PALS Programs – 2 separate initiatives with a common goal – enriching the lives of our children throughout the Anglophone South School District.

Following is a brief history and overview of the Community Schools and PALS programs, with more detailed info attached.

History

In 2000 Mr. JK Irving approached the School District to see if there was any way he and his company (JDI) and employees could partner with a local school, Prince Charles. This came about as a result of his involvement with BCIPI, the Business Community Anti-Poverty Committee. A report by Deloitte & Touche commissioned by BCIPI had recommended that to make sustainable generational changes in poverty, providing support to children was the key.

The intent was to free up employee time to volunteer at PCS in any way the school needed, to provide some financial assistance and ultimately to develop a blueprint that could be adopted and adapted at 6 other schools in the Saint John Education Centre that serve Priority neighbourhoods.

It has, however spread to other schools across ASDS who see a need for partnerships for other reasons. For example, in the St. Stephen Education Centre – the impetus for establishing the PALS program was an identified need for Mentorship for their young people.

Community Schools

In 2006 the Department of Education had a vision to establish and designate Community Schools throughout the province in both Anglophone and Francophone Sectors. We were very pleased to have the big kick-off and announcement right here in the ASDS!

A community school is a place that fosters relationships that are used to transform a traditional school into a center of opportunity for children, youth, families, and communities before, during and after school, seven days a week.

A community school is the center for a wide range of programs and services that address the diverse needs of the community. It is where parents and community members work in partnership with educators to support the school as a center of learning with a focus on academics and family supports.

It creates a different way of supporting kids and is open to the community beyond regular school hours to meet the needs of preschoolers, youth, adults and seniors. Children and youth are the primary focus of our partnerships and are at the center of community activities There is an unconditional commitment to children and young people and a belief that they will be successful.

We currently have 16 Community Schools in the ASDS. All are unique and provide a hub for their respective communities. The activities and programs at each of our Community Schools is initiated by the principals and implemented by our School-based coordinators.

In our District our Community School Coordinators have daily schedules that are as unique as the school and community they serve – but they are essential in the successful functioning of a community school and the nurturing of partnerships!

Partnerships

Whatever the reason for our PALS or community partnerships, volunteers are the backbone - it truly is the people who are the key to their success. They are choosing to partner with school staff and parents to make a difference in the lives of our students.

Each partnership is unique, and schools may have many partners. Some companies are able to provide people power to mentor and volunteer at a local school, while others may like to help out financially.

All the efforts of PALS and community partnerships are directed to complement the School Improvement Plan of the partner school and to fulfill their identified needs.

The focus is mainly on:

- Supporting Literacy/Numeracy initiatives
- Providing mentorship in many ways
- Volunteers who help with everything from mentoring, reading buddies, coaching, helping with breakfast or lunch, enrichment, field trips, to in class supports
- Providing for Basic needs
- Funding for identified needs
- Career guidance, exploration, and experiential learning

PALS has really grown since its early beginnings in 2000. Today:

- 30+ PALS schools in Anglophone South School District
- several other PALS schools in other NB districts, and one in Halifax
- over 150 partners in Anglophone South
- Over 1000 volunteers directly or indirectly involved helping students
- PALS has expanded from elementary into high school

It is our hope that you can see how our Community Schools and PALS play an enormous part in our schools. The constant support of people power, financial donations, and mentoring help level the playing field for all our students and their families. Our student learning and education is enhanced each and every day that they come to school, and they have hope for new opportunities and a future. These partnerships make our students go from believing it is impossible to believing that “I’m possible”.