

Accountability Report

Halifax Regional Centre for Education

July 10, 2024

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction 4
- 2.0 Annual Report of Achievements for 2023-24 5
- 3.0 Key Facts 11
- 4.0 Financial Summary and Variance Explanation 14

1.0 Introduction

Mission Statement

The mission statement of HRCE is:

Providing a high-quality education for every student every day.

Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) operates 137 schools, serves more than 59,000 students, and employs approximately 10,000 teachers and support staff. HRCE shares a geographic boundary with the Halifax Regional Municipality with schools located throughout the region serving urban, suburban, and rural populations.

HRCE works in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) to provide programming and services from Pre-Primary to Grade 12. HRCE strives to address current and emerging student needs.

This Accountability Report covers the period April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. While the budget covers that time frame, most, if not all, of the Business Plan priorities are intended to fall within the next school year, September 2023 to June 2024.

In planning for 2023-24, the Regional Executive Director of Education (RED) and members of Senior Staff applied the core beliefs of the Regional Student Success Plan (RSSP) adopted in November 2019.

These beliefs are:

- All students can learn and achieve at high levels.
- All teachers can teach with precision and impact.
- All Principals can effectively lead instruction and learning.

The RSSP complements school-based Student Success Plans and focuses efforts on the high leverage strategy of collective professionalism to meet the needs of all students. The objective is to improve results for all students in mathematics, literacy, and well-being. This process aligns with the work of other Regional Centres for Education (RCEs), Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) and EECD, which provides provincial coherence and alignment in public education.

HRCE continues to see growth and success in many areas of its operations while managing within the current fiscal reality of the province. The priorities outlined in last year's business plan were developed to build on this success while aligning with the core beliefs defined above.

2.0 Annual Report of Achievements for 2023-24

Focus on Student Success and Well-being

To improve achievement results, the HRCE will:

1. Review the School Learning Community (SLC) model to increase impact for students in mathematics, literacy, and well-being.
 - Both the Elementary and Secondary Program Departments reviewed the SLC model both as a concept and as an existing structure for leading learning.
 - While the Secondary Program team did not recommend significant changes, the Elementary Program team recommended reorganizing SLC groupings to cluster schools with French Immersion programming.
 - All changes to SLC 1-5 are now complete.
2. Develop and implement a system-level dashboard to track student success.
 - The first version of the system dashboard was developed with data from both PowerSchool and HRCE's Classroom-Based Assessment System.
 - Literacy and mathematics results were included, and the dashboard allowed for review of system, SLC, school, classroom, and individual results over the course of the school year.
3. Implement short-term space strategies to respond to growth in our communities.
 - Prior to the opening of school in September of 2023, the Operations Services team relocated 15 portable classrooms to accommodate growth pressures at various schools.
4. Complete capital projects, including renovations and new school construction to ensure safe and healthy learning spaces.
 - Modular projects were completed at the following schools:
 - Bedford South: 6-classroom modular
 - Halifax West High: 12-classroom modular
 - Harry R. Hamilton Elementary: 6-classroom modular
 - Elizabeth Sutherland: 8-classroom modular
 - Ellenvale Junior High: 12-classroom modular
 - HRCE supported the opening of two new schools in West Bedford in September 2023 and continued to provide support to two new school projects:
 - New St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay (SJAM) Elementary
 - New Eastern Shore District High
 - The following TCA projects were approved for the 2023-24 Fiscal Year:
 - A.J. Smeltzer Junior High (roof repair)
 - Caledonia Junior High (roof repair)

- Crichton Park Elementary (roof repair)
- Tantallon Senior Elementary (roof repair)
- Rockingham Elementary (roof repair)
- John W. MacLeod Elementary (site work)
- École Beaufort Elementary (currently housing SJAM students while new school is underway) (heating upgrades)

5. Implement a self-directed learning model at West Bedford High School.

- Self-Directed Learning (SDL) was launched in September 2023 at West Bedford High for students in Grade 10.
- Feedback from students, staff and families is extremely positive and registration for next year has increased by 200%.

Focus on Inclusion and Equity

To enhance opportunities for all students to thrive, the HRCE will:

1. Review the Student Services model to increase the well-being and achievement of every student.

- The scope of review was determined in early fall and an external facilitator was contracted to complete the process.
- Five focus groups were held (each session was three hours) with various stakeholders before a report was prepared.
- A series of actionable items were identified as needing improvement. The Student Services team plans to implement these early in the 2024-25 school year.

2. Implement the Three Braids anti-racist, anti-discrimination training for all school-based administrators.

- Given the nature of Three Braids training and the large number of HRCE staff requiring it, a schedule was developed to ensure all Principals and Vice Principals completed the four sessions before the start of the 2024-25 school year.
- Principals completed the training on the following dates:
 - Module 1: October 4-6, 2023
 - Module 2: November 28-29, 2023
 - Module 3: April 10-11, 2024
 - Module 4: June 5-6, 2024
- Vice Principals completed the training on the following dates:
 - Module 1: February 6-8, 2024
 - Module 2: May 21-31, 2024
 - Module 3: June 10-12, 2024
 - Module 4: planned for August 29, 2024

3. Implement the new provincial employee self-identification process.

- Experience Advisors (XA) were hired to administer and manage the self-identification process on behalf of all RCEs/CSAP.
 - An Employee Self-identification Survey was rolled out to all employees and available for completion from January 16 through February 7.
 - 3,702 HRCE employees completed the survey and aggregated data was provided to Human Resource Services. A final report was completed and will be shared with Senior Staff.
4. Develop a strategy to support newcomer students and families.
- A strategy to support newcomer students and their families was developed and presented to the RED in January and shared with the EECD staff in May.
 - The priorities outlined in the strategy include:
 - Open a Newcomer Welcome Centre
 - Provide more support to schools
 - Create an Orientation to School program
 - Expand EAL programming at the high school level
 - Develop a Youth Pathways program
 - As an initial step and pilot, a Newcomer Welcome Centre opened in March at St. Agnes Junior High.
5. Launch a tool to support school-based administrators in addressing attacks on student identity.
- A tool was developed internally by IT and introduced to Principals and Vice Principals at the in the fall.
 - After preliminary testing, the tool went live at the end of October and to date, more than 700 entries have been submitted.

Focus on Families and Our Community

To enhance collaboration and communication, the HRCE will:

1. Engage in active outreach to underrepresented communities.
- EECD announced initiatives to strengthen local voice in December. The announcement included:
 - Establishing a Regional School Advisory Council (RSAC) to reflect the region's diversity.
 - Establishing a Student Regional Advisory Committee with representation from under-served groups.
 - Members reflecting HRCE's diversity were selected, and meetings were hosted on May 27 for the Student Advisory Committee and June 12 for the RSAC. The next round of meetings is scheduled for October.

- In addition, staff from Central Office hosted a day-long session with students identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+. This event occurred on May 27 and provided the students with an opportunity to share their experiences and advice with senior leaders.
2. Develop and implement a new consultation process for growth and other system changes.
 - EECD announced initiatives to strengthen local voices in December. The announcement included:
 - Leading public engagement sessions with parents and guardians of school-aged children, three times a year, to discuss student achievement, well-being, and capital planning.
 - Two public engagement sessions were hosted during the 2023-24 school year. The first session, which focused on student achievement, took place on February 28. The second session, focused on student well-being, occurred on June 4.
 - Growth in the HRCE was reviewed and discussed at both sessions. The next session, focusing on capital planning, is scheduled for October 2024.
 3. Provide school-based administrators multiple opportunities for professional learning around communications.
 - During the 2023-24 school year, the Communications Team provided training in Effective School Communications, to all Principals, all Vice Principals, all Supervisors, all members of the Aspiring School Administrators Program and several other employee groups, including members of the Diversity Team and African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers.
 4. Undertake a review and re-organization of Connect@HRCE to improve communication with families.
 - As part of the Local Voice initiative, the EECD has identified improved communication with families as a priority, with a greater focus on ensuring families' questions are answered.
 - An aligned provincial approach is being worked on and HRCE will fully participate.

Focus on Our Team

To recruit, retain and strengthen our workforce, the HRCE will:

1. Introduce the provincial Leadership Standards to all school-based administrators.
 - All school-based administrators and regional PSAANS staff were introduced to the Educational Leadership Standards by the RED in August. Additional sessions occurred in September for all Principals, Vice Principals and regional PSAANS staff.
 - School Supervisors used the Educational Leadership Standards and Indicators to set growth and evaluation goals with administrators.

2. Complete Threat Risk Assessment training for all school leaders.
 - All Principals and Vice Principals were enrolled in a four-hour, online course in Threat Risk Assessment through the Centre for Trauma Informed Practices (CTIP).
 - In November, all Principals participated in two days of in-person training in Violence and Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) with CTIP.
 - Planning is underway to offer the same in-person training to Vice Principals in the 2024-25 school year.
3. Implement the new provincial compensation framework for all non-union employees.
 - The new provincial compensation framework was successfully implemented.
4. Participate in a provincial working group to ensure readiness for the implementation of a new sub-finder system, effective September 2024.
 - HRCE staff participated in the provincial workgroup.
 - A contract between HRCE and Apply to Education for the EasyConnect Absence and Attendance Management System was signed on February 6, 2024.
 - Implementation work is now underway with the goal of having the EasyConnect system in place for September 2024.
5. Implement the new provincial Teacher Assistant / Education Program Assistant Guidelines.
 - The new provincial Teacher Assistant Guidelines have not yet been approved by EECD, but HRCE staff have drafted an implementation plan.
6. Implement cyber security strategic initiatives to ensure that the data and systems leveraged by HRCE are well-protected.
 - Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) was put in place for all teaching staff and contracted substitutes in the fall of 2023 and for all CUPE, NSUPE, and additional in-school support staff in the spring of 2024. As staff moved to MFA, they also completed phishing/cyber security training.
 - IT staff also implemented a Privileged Access Management (PAM) solution (Beyond Trust) and began the process to implement a Mobile Device Management solution (InTune). They decommissioned 17 local servers (six more will be decommissioned in the summer of 2024) and upgraded HRCE's backend Forti and NetApp systems to the latest security patches.
 - HRCE staff also contributed to the development of provincial policies and created a local working group to continuously improve the cyber controls HRCE has in place.
7. Refresh and expand financial training for school and system leaders.
 - 71 of the 75 schools requesting "refreshers" received training before the end of March. The four remaining schools received training before the end of June.
 - Two webinars on the year-end financial process were offered and well received.

- Planning is underway to create a short video on HST rebate claims and, based on that learning, the Finance Team will look to create other videos during the summer on processes like writing a cheque, processing deposits, and catalog item creation.
8. Develop and implement workflow improvements leveraging technology (such as Microsoft 365) to gain administrative efficiencies throughout the system.
- An Internal SharePoint site was developed and launched for all staff in the Spring of 2024. This provides staff with a central place to access information and forms formerly housed in MyHRCE on a local server.
 - More than 60% of HRCE schools are now leveraging Teams for their Purchase Order Requisition processes. This will move to 100% in September of 2024.
 - Central Office staff have been trained to use OneDrive and Teams, and select staff are piloting Copilot (AI) to identify its impact on workflow.
 - IT staff consulted with a Microsoft Expert on workflow development using PowerApps and Power Automate to implement additional workflows where possible. A development plan has been created and will be rolled out in the 2024-25 school year.
9. Undertake a review and re-organization of IT help desk structure to improve technology support to staff.
- A review was completed and recommended scheduling changes have been implemented. This new approach provides more flexibility for staff providing day-to-day service to schools to improve response time.
 - A technology device management strategy was also developed to assist schools in maintaining their existing peripherals for longevity. Additional supporting technology (such as Chromebook carts) was provided to schools to assist in their device management.
 - The implementation of an ITSM (ticketing system) at Central Office is planned for the summer of 2024.

3.0 Key Facts

Key Fact Category		
Students	September 30, 2022	September 30, 2023
Pre Primary	2918	2,703
Primary to Grade 12	53,787	55,555
Total Number of Students	56,705	58,258
Average Class Size P-2	20.3	20.3
Average Class Size 3-6	24.4	24.4
Average Class Size 7-9	24.6	24.7
Average Class Size 10-12	23.6	23.9
Total Number of Sections 10-12	3582	3770
Staff (FTEs)	September 30, 2022	September 30, 2023
School based educators & Administration	3,982.7	4133.8
School Based Non-Teaching Support	1,175.2	1,240.2
Programming Support	71.5	66.5
Non-Teaching Programming Support	136	136
Transportation	12	12
Property Services	398.7	423
Administration	104	104
Technology Support	39	41
Other Programs	431	431
Technology	September 30, 2022	September 30, 2023
Students/Instructional Computer	1.15:1	1.26:1
Computers & Devices/Technician	2605:1	2807:1
Property Services	2022-2023	2023-2024
Total Square Footage*	7,847,384#	8,197,524
Sq. Ft./Student*	138.4	140.7
Private Operator Sq. Ft.*	N/A	N/A
Operating Costs*	\$64,213,802	\$68,508,105
Operating Cost/Sq. Ft.*	8.18	8.36
Transportation	2022-2023	2023-2024
Total Buses on Regular Routes*	403	417
Total Spare Buses Operated*	48	50

Total Students Transported*	30,929	31,632
Total Student Transportation Cost*	\$37,635,922	\$43,746,277
Total Cost/Student Transported*	\$1,217	\$1,382.98
Total number of bus runs daily*	1,924	1,997
Average number of students/bus run*	32.29	21.85 Big busses/15.84 all busses
Cost/Unit – Contracted*	\$93,389	\$93,675.11
Cost/Unit – HRCE*	N/A	N/A

*** As of March 31st for everything but student count, please use Sept 30th for enrollment numbers.**

Definitions and Calculations:

Students (all based on Sept 30th statistics):

Total Number of Students: Sept. 30th Total Enrolment (funded & unfunded)

Average Class Size P-2

Average Class Size 3-6

Average Class Size 7-9

Average Class Size 10-12

Total Number of Classes & Sections

Staff:

School based Educators and Administrators: Includes Teachers (including resource Teachers, Principals and Vice Principals), School Admin staff, Guidance, Psychologists, etc.

School based Non-Teaching Support: Includes Education or Teaching Assistants, School Secretaries, etc.

Programming Support: School Administration Supervisors, Coordinators of school programming and school services

Non- Teaching Programming Support: Secretaries, administration assistants and those positions not captured in programming support

Transportation: Bus Drivers, Mechanics, and other related administration staff

Property Services: Custodians, Maintenance and Trades staff

Administration: Superintendents, Finance Staff, Human Resources Staff, Operations Staff, and other related administration positions

Technology Support: Supervisors of School Technology, Networking Specialists, and other related IT support positions

Other Programs: FTEs connected to programs including, but not limited to, international services programs, before & after school programs, etc.

Technology:

Student/Instructional Computer: Ratio of Number of Students: Computers

Computers & Devices/Technician: Total Computers & Devices across RCE/CSAP/Technical Support FTEs

Property Service:

Total School Sq. Ft.: Total square footage of all buildings operated by RCEs/CSAP, including RCE office, bus garages, maintenance buildings.

Sq. Ft. /Student: Total square footage from above divided by Sept. 30th unaudited student count

Private Operator Sq. Ft.: Total square footage of all P3 schools excluding net/net lease P3s

Operating Costs: Custodial, maintenance and utility costs for the previous fiscal year actuals. Includes repairs and maintenance expenses funded in the annual profile sheet, does not include any major capital expenditures (TCA) funded by the RCE/CSAP or by the department (TCA Major or repair funding over \$150K)

Operating Costs/Sq. Ft.: Total op cost/Sq. Ft. of all buildings maintained by RCE/CSAP including net/net P3s

Transportation:

Total Buses on Regular Routes: Total units operated on a daily basis by RCE

Total Spare Buses Operated: Total number of spare buses

Total Students Transported: All students transported – includes courtesy bused and privately conveyed

Total Student Transportation Cost: Actual from previous year

Total Cost/Student Transported: Total transportation audited actuals/total students transported

Total number of bus runs daily: Total of all regularly scheduled bus runs/day

Average number of students/bus run: Average of all students/number of daily bus runs

Cost/Unit – Contracted buses: Total transportation contract cost/all buses

Cost/Unit - RCE: Total transportation cost/all buses

Total number of KM students were transported: Total KM of all regular bus run driven while transporting students on regular runs in a school year

Total number of KM buses traveled: Total KM of all regular bus runs, extra and co-curricular trips and transport of buses to and from the various stops during the school year.

4.0 Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Key Financial Indicators				
	2023-24 Budget	2023-24 Actuals	2023-24 Variance	Material Variance Explanations
Revenue				
Province of Nova Scotia				
Provincial Funding	495,306,500	525,352,891	30,046,391	\$11.7 million increase in retro claims and wage pressures driven by settled collective agreements \$7.0 million one-time investment in technology \$4.5 million driven by teachers' pension and benefits \$2.0 million in technology support and professional developments extensions \$1.6 million in OLEP funding Net increases of \$2.8 million in other areas, including funding for inflationary pressures (\$1.3) million decrease due to deferred Article 60 funding
Provincial Initiatives and Grants	33,907,500	30,724,059	(3,183,441)	(\$1.6) million decrease in pre-primary funding (\$576.0) thousand decrease due to deferred IPP Substitution funding
Halifax Regional Municipality	173,833,800	173,833,800	-	
Government of Canada	1,249,200	837,254	(411,946)	Decrease driven by deferral of Minority Official Language funding
Regional Operations	19,137,100	20,008,751	871,651	\$940.0 thousand increase in International Studies tuition \$636.0 thousand increase in breakfast prog (\$723.0) thousand net decreases in other areas
School Based Funds	-	9,187,008	9,187,008	School based funds not budgeted or forecasted throughout the year.
Total Revenue	723,434,100	759,943,763	36,509,663	
Expenditures				
Office of the Regional Executive Director	1,370,100	2,186,469	816,369	\$681.0 thousand increase in professional services \$135.0 thousand net increase in salaries and benefits primarily due to the new compensation framework

Financial Services	3,507,000	3,634,675	127,675	\$127.7 thousand pressure primarily driven by increases in insurance premiums
Human Resource Services	3,393,500	3,550,474	156,974	\$157.0 thousand net increases primarily driven by salaries and benefits
Programs and Student Services (Elem/Sec)				
Programs and Student Services Salaries & Benefits	536,800,900	544,273,622	7,472,722	\$8.0 million pressure in classroom teachers' primarily due to enrollment growth (\$800.0) thousand net decreases in other areas
Program Resources	19,095,700	16,798,245	(2,297,455)	(\$905.0) thousand decrease in Minority Official Language (\$884.0) thousand decreases in school based materials (\$508.0) thousand net decreases in other areas
Student Services Resources	4,329,700	3,386,443	(943,257)	(\$515.0) thousand in savings for Special Needs Support based on current year needs (\$576.0) thousand in savings in IPP substitute days are offset by a revenue deferral \$148.0 thousand net increases in other areas
Professional Development	4,181,200	3,188,671	(992,529)	(\$1.3) million decrease due to deferred Article 60 spending \$307.5 thousand net increase primarily driven by Math implementation, RCH and Literacy implementation
International Students	3,343,600	3,691,012	347,412	\$465.0 thousand increase in home stay payments, school payments, salaries & benefits and supplies (\$118.0K) thousand savings in orientation activities and travel
Adult and Community Education	380,500	307,623	(72,877)	
Operations Services				
Operational Regional Administration	3,058,700	2,844,985	(213,715)	(\$222.0) thousand in savings, primarily driven by position vacancies
Custodial Services	27,978,400	32,704,163	4,725,763	\$2.7 million pressure, primarily related to settled collective agreements \$623.0 thousand increase in services contracts due to inflation \$826.0 thousand increase in supplies due to supplier price increases; \$597.0 thousand increase in overtime wages (\$46.0) thousand in net decreases in other areas

Maintenance Services	10,270,700	13,953,994	3,683,294	\$3.4 million increase in maintenance supplies and services primarily driven by dehumidifiers \$300.0 thousand net increase in other areas
Plant Operations	20,242,600	21,849,948	1,607,348	\$914.0 thousand net increase in utilities primarily driven by rate increases \$306.0 thousand from insurance increases for fire protection \$380.0 thousand pressure due to municipal levies
Capital Projects	1,345,200	4,445,605	3,100,405	Enrollment growth pressures including portable moves
Student Transportation	40,069,300	40,610,183	540,883	\$699.0 thousand pressure due to additional routes added (\$158.0) thousand net increases in other areas
Facilities Rentals	486,500	504,234	17,734	
Technology Services	6,333,200	13,765,487	7,432,287	\$7.4 million pressure primarily driven by a one-time investment in technology upgrades
Other Programs				
Excel/NS-BAP	12,847,300	12,395,311	(451,989)	(\$452.0) thousand net savings, primarily driven salaries and benefits related to unscheduled breaks in programming
Pre-Primary Program	24,400,000	23,290,169	(1,109,831)	(\$1.7) million savings in non-salary expenses \$600.0 thousand pressure in salaries and benefits primarily related to settled collective agreements
School Based Funds	-	9,063,507	9,063,507	School based funds not budgeted or forecasted throughout the year.
Total Expenses	723,434,100	756,444,820	33,010,720	
Annual Operating Surplus (Deficit)		-		
Opening Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)		-		
Closing Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)		-		