



## 2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT



## OVERVIEW

2011 was an exciting and dynamic year at ILA in more ways than one. During the course of the year, several important moments occurred which warrant highlighting in this report.

First, we launched 2011 by expanding our After-School and Virtual Tutoring program to St Andrew Junior School and Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School in the Strait Regional School Board in the town of Antigonish. This expansion increases our presence in 75% of the school districts in Nova Scotia. This increase in our geographical reach moves us closer to our goal of implementing our high quality programs to all school districts throughout the province.

While expanding to reach new areas in Nova Scotia, we also increased our presence in locations where our programs currently exist. For example, we added Oxford School to our list of target schools in the Halifax Regional Municipalities (HRM), while we continued to offer our After-School Programs at other sites such as Truro Junior High, Whitney Pier Memorial Junior High, and Caledonia Junior High.

We continue to strive for excellence in the programs that we provide to young African Canadian learners throughout the Province. Keeping up with this, we re-launched our virtual high school tutoring program based on the new delivery platform – Blackboard Collaborate; a web based virtual learning tool. This new delivery platform, in combination with other factors, led to the successful pilot of the program in Sydney Academy and Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School. Through this pilot we were able to collect information from program participants, enabling us to enhance various aspects of the program, in order to develop it into an efficient education supplement tool for African Canadian learners throughout Nova Scotia.

2011 has also been marked by an expansion in the scope of our programs and by the initiation and development of new partnerships. Part of ILA's mission is to provide young African Canadians with learning opportunities that could potentially ignite and sustain their interest in the STEM field. As such, in collaboration with the Robotic and Computer Science department at Acadia University, we introduced a robot design and programming activity to our lineup of events. One of the main objectives of this activity is to develop teams at each target school to compete in the First Lego League Robot Design and Programming competition held annually at Acadia University. In preparation to fully integrate the activity into our After-School program, we conducted a pilot in the form of a summer camp to determine the potential interest that this activity could generate among our program participants. The results from this camp was exciting and encouraging. We are confident that this activity will further enhance the engineering and technology facet of our program.

2011 was the year of scholarship at ILA. In March of last year, in recognition of ILA's leadership and progressive approach to improving the education outcome of African Canadians in the STEM field, ILA was awarded one million dollars endowment funds to establish scholarships that will provide crucial financial support to young African Canadian learners admitted into any STEM field of study at Dalhousie University. This generous support and mutually beneficial long-term partnership with TD Bank moves ILA further along its mission path. Preparations are currently under way to identify



potential candidates among whom the first recipient of this scholarship will be selected and awarded by the year 2014.

Keeping with our mission and values we also partnered with the faculty of science and the faculty of medicine in order to design and award two summer research scholarships to students of African Canadian descent. The gist of this initiative is to provide deserving students the opportunity to gain valuable research experience, which is deemed crucial to starting a career in the STEM field. We are currently negotiating with the faculty of engineering in order to establish a similar scholarship to support summer research opportunity for students of African Canadian descent in engineering.

Despite these exciting moments, 2011 was also a tumultuous transition period at ILA. We traversed a restructuring of the organization, which resulted in a change in leadership as well as the expiration of our three year strategic objectives. As the dust settles, a new and dynamic leadership team has emerged to meet the challenges ahead, as well as steer ILA toward attaining its mission. The new leadership team had embarked on a journey to chart a new course for the organization, which will materialize in the form of its strategic plan for the next five years.

# Programming

## *After-School Program*

2011 was another exciting year for the After-School Program. The program continues to experience great success at all target sites, which has enabled its expansion to new sites and in number of student participants. This year 70 students registered in the program throughout our 5 sites: Oxford School, Caledonia Junior High, Truro Junior High, Whitney Pier Memorial, and St. Andrew Junior School.

In 2009, due to the increasing demand of our after school program by school administrators, parents, and various African Nova Scotian community leaders, the ILA initiated a strategic geographical expansion of the after school program to Antigonish. The area of Antigonish and Guysborough is home to several vibrant African Nova Scotian communities. However, due to inadequate economic conditions, young African Nova Scotian learners do not have access to learning opportunities in Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) field. An expansion to this area was a natural and strategic fit for ILA's mission. Following two years of preparation ILA, in partnership with Encana Corporation, implemented the After-School Program at St Andrew Junior School, Antigonish on January 10, 2011.

St. Andrew Junior School comprises the largest population of African Nova Scotian students in the junior high level though it only consists of grades 7 and 8.



Program Coordinator Ernest working with a grade 8 student

The implementation of the program at this site is also made possible by its proximity to St Francis Xavier University. The program has thus far been well received by school administrators and parents alike. Many parents, realizing the potential of the program, requested that the program be delivered to their children in grade 6 as well. With such enthusiasm, St Andrew Junior School is fast becoming our most successful target site in Nova Scotia.

Since 2008, there have been plans to introduce the after school program to Oxford School in Halifax. However, due to financial and other logistical difficulties, this expansion did not proceed until 3 years later. In January 24<sup>th</sup> 2011, ILA introduced the After-School program at Oxford School with the magic show. Parents, and school administrators attended this event. The combined effort of the school administrators and mentors is rapidly turning oxford school into the most successful school that we have implemented the after-school program at in the Halifax Regional Municipalities (HRM).

In other parts of the province, the after-school program started in the second half of the year. Just as in previous years, Whitney Pier Memorial Junior High School (WPMJHS) had the larger number of registered students in the program. The close tie between community members in Whitney Pier can be looked to as the source of influence on the participation rate in the after-school program in that school.

In Truro Junior High, the program did not run with the level of success that it experienced in other area. Several reasons could be identified as the cause. However, the program was mainly affected by the late start of the activities, the recruitment and training of a new mentoring team. These resulted in loss of interest by students. Despite this, the program still receives strong support from the school administrators and teachers.

We successfully ran the program at Caledonia Junior High School again this year. In 2011, the program started on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October; the earliest the program has ever started. However, with the departure of Vice Principal Stymest, we have lost a level of enthusiasm as well as support from the school administrators. This has at time impeded the delivery of some of the sessions.

### **Field Trips**



Oxford School student observe marine wild life during a trip to the museum of natural history

This year, students at all ILA's sites had the opportunity to go on a number of excellent educational and interactive field trips. In Antigonish, program participants took part in a field trip to the Museum of Industry where they were able to learn about the progression of Industry in Nova Scotia, specifically as it related to the Black Loyalists. Four students learned about the names and occupations of some of their ancestors. It was thrilling to see the students' excitement as they learned about the men and women who first brought their family line to Nova Scotia.

A second trip was organized in collaboration with Encana corporation to the Dagger Woods Marsh, where student learned about wetland conservation area. They also learned about animals that inhabited the wetland area. They learned about how a beaver skillfully cuts and strips wood. Overall students learned in a hands-on way the many benefits wetlands provide our environment, such as filtering water and providing a home for wildlife.

The Sydney Field Trip to CBU was also very exciting for the students. They worked with CBU professors and students to perform Chemistry and Biology experiments. The students learned about suspension and polymers. They were able to see the way a mixture of cornstarch and water can act both like a liquid and a solid depending on the pressure put on it. In a biology lab, students were able to do DNA



Students from St Andrew Junior School visit the dagger wood marsh

extraction and Bacterial diseases identification. When a professor asked one student whether he had passed the test of making the activities fun, the student replied that he had aced it!

A third exciting and educational trip was the visit to the Museum of Natural History by Oxford and Caledonia students. The students had the opportunity to learn about Sue, the largest known T-Rex and to explore the many other interesting displays at the museum. Denisho, a grade 8 student at Oxford School says, “I want to have another trip like this again. It was fun . . . I learned that dinosaurs have different bones and that some have bigger bones and some smaller . . . I saw live animals, frogs, snakes, fish.”

### The Science Activities



Grade 9 mentors demonstrates the freezing properties of liquid nitrogen

The after-School science activities are designed based on Nova Scotia’s Department of Education curriculum outcome for each grade. In 2011, we undertook the task of revamping the content of the activities materials that we rely on to deliver the after school program to participants. We improved the content of the lesson plans that the mentors use to deliver each activity. This process led to the elimination of some activities, and the development of new ones.

We also made some changes to the order of activities delivery. We have rearranged the order of the activities such that those that are conceptually similar are delivered consecutively. This is we believe will enhance the conceptual understanding of the material covered in each activity.

### Mentors Recruitment and Development

This year, we recruited ten new university students to be mentors in the after school program throughout our sites. In Truro and Antigonish, we put in place an entirely new team while in Halifax and Sydney we hired one and three new mentors respectively. In order to enhance the ability of mentors to effectively convey to the program participants the information contained in the activities materials, we engaged them in two weekends long training sessions in early January and late February 2011. During these sessions, mentors participated in workshops on classroom management strategies, and the History of Education in African Nova Scotian Communities. Mentors also delivered after-school lessons to Dalhousie University professors, who critiqued and suggested way in which mentors lessons plans as well as delivery technique can be improved. These training sessions are gradually equipping the after school mentors with tools that enables them to authoritatively assume the role of a teacher while delivering the science activities.

## Challenges

Despite the fact that the After-School program experienced many successes this year, it has also endured several challenges. The main ones are listed below.

### 1. Attendance

As in previous years, attendance posed a major challenge to the successful delivery of the After-School Program. To varying degrees, all of the sites struggled with maintaining a high level of attendance from the students. Various reasons contributed to this lack of attendance, such as other extra-curricular activities, behavioral management problems, lack of interest, and forgetfulness. Extra-curricular activities such as varsity sports particularly hindered the ability of our mentors to retain student participants as well as interest in the program. In Caledonia Junior High and Oxford, this effect was more pronounced. In Truro Junior High as well as Whitney Pier Memorial Junior High School, attendance was mostly affected by several delays to the start of the program. Due to a transitioning process that took place at these sites, the after-school program could only start in January, while school started in September. Such delays meant that students' time after school, attention and interest were captured by other activities. Plans are in place for the upcoming year to address the attendance issue.

### 2. Parental Involvement

The second major challenge faced this year was a lack of parental involvement. Although there were situations where parents showed their active interest in the program (such as a parent chaperone for one of the Antigonish field trips), overall, many parents displayed little interest in and/or knowledge of Imhotep programming. Parental involvement has been cited by commentators in education as an essential component influencing the success of students. Research shows that students', whose parents are actively involved in their extracurricular activities, perform better than those whose parents are less involved.

### 3. Mentors motivation

Though the mentors who deliver the after school activities are highly motivated student of African descent, they at time experience difficulty with how to balance their school requirement, with the expectations placed on them as mentors in the after-school program. This often resulted in a lackadaisical attitude that in their preparation for the activities. Plans are in place to help mentors enhance their abilities to balance their schoolwork and what is expected of them as mentors. One of the thing we are going to implement is a compulsory one week time period between when an activity is prepared and when it is delivered. This will help mentors manage the pressure of assignments and exams better. We will be implementing a monthly performance evaluation rather than a yearly performance evaluation. This will enable us to identify any problem related to mentors motivation early enough in order to mitigate its impact on the delivery of activities.

## **Looking toward 2011-2012 School year**

For the After-school Program we envision three main goals for the coming school year

- 1 – Improved Student Attendance and Participation
- 2 – Improved Parental Involvement
- 3 – Improved Mentor Commitment and Dedication

Below are specific plans on how Imhotep Legacy Academy should endeavor to achieve these goals for the upcoming year.

The first main goal for the 2011-2012 year will be **Improved Student Attendance and Participation**

As the graphs in the appendix reveal, over the past school year, for a variety of reasons, there have been many sessions at all of the sites where not even half of the registered students were in attendance. Obviously, we need to work to improve this.

The first way of improving student attendance and participation will be to implement a **Reward Chart**

- Each site will have charts with stickers for Attendance, Active Participation, and Exceptional Contribution (I believe this extra incentive will help to promote active engagement and positive attitudes from students.) At the end of every two months the students with the most stickers will be awarded a double movie pass. (No one student will win twice in a row). We'll also let students know that stickers can be removed for particularly troublesome behavior problems.
- The prize for Student of the Year will be announced ahead of time to provide incentive for the students, letting them know that their success according to the charts will be taken into consideration in choosing a student of the year. As well as smaller prizes, such as a science magazine subscription, the main prize should be something really motivating for students to work hard throughout the year such as a weeklong trip to an exciting science destination.
- A second method to improve student attendance and participation will be **Regular Phone Calls** to their homes. We will have mentors call their students each week two to three days before the session to remind students and encourage them to come.



- Mentors can take this time to chat a bit with students, ask about any homework help needed if it's a math week or let them know about the activity if it's a science week. Mentors will also ask to speak to the parent or guardian at this time to ask them to remind their child to attend and to ask if they know of any area they will like mentors to focus on with homework help.
- A third way to improve student attendance and participation will be through **Relationship Building Days**  
Once every month or two months we will have an activity day for mentors and students to help build relationships. This day will be focused on fun activities and will be in addition to the regularly scheduled activities. Groups could play basketball, or some other active sport or activity. After the Christmas breaks, some of these days could be used to start prepping for the closing ceremonies. Mentors reported this year that they felt they bonded the most with the students during this prep time.
- Participation in the **Lego-League** is another avenue to improve student attendance and participation.
  - We will present participation in the Lego-League robot opportunity as a privilege. Students will need to keep up participation and attendance at weekly sessions to maintain eligibility to compete in the competition.
- A fourth avenue to improve student attendance and participation will be through **Science Fair Participation**
  - We will have mentors work with students to participate in at least one science fair over the course of the school year.
    - This could be the official Nova Scotia Science Fair, the Where Challenge or one of the other science events in the province.
    - To decrease staffing costs, it will be a good idea to enlist Virtual School participants to take a role in volunteering to help After School program participants in developing these science fair projects. The mentors could be more hands-off, just overseeing the work between the Junior and High School students. Participation in this could be another incentive/bonus for both Junior and High School students to improve their chances of receiving a scholarship from Imhotep.
- The TD Opportunity **Scholarship** is a final incentive we have for students to maintain attendance and participation in Imhotep programming. We will give students and their parent's clear guidelines on how to be eligible and maintain eligibility for the scholarship throughout their grade school careers (which will, of course, include regular participation and engagement in Imhotep programs).

We believe these steps have the potential to greatly improve student attendance. Many of the student's absences are unexcused, which means its likely students are not seeing the benefit of attending Imhotep.

Each of these initiatives will require various levels of financial commitment to make them possible and to maintain.

Involving parents more and using them as advocates for the program will give students added encouragement and motivation to attend – which leads us to the next main goal for the 2011-2012 school year, **Improved Parental Involvement**.

From calls made this year to parents, some parents whose children had been in Imhotep for three years didn't even know what Imhotep was.

- The first potential way to increase parental involvement is through **Home Visits**. This may prove difficult and we may face resistance, but we think the effort should be made to meet one on one with each family at the start of the year. If parents are resisting this, we could try to meet them at a nearby coffee shop, or as a last resort, set up phone conversations. The program coordinator and (if possible) an ILA office staff member will make these visits to talk to parents one on one. The goal is to make sure parents or guardians are aware of their child's involvement in ILA, what ILA is all about, the many potential academic and social benefits for their child, and the possibility of receiving a scholarship through active participation. A secondary goal of these meetings will be to enlist parent's help and encouragement to ensure consistent attendance in the program from their student. At this time, parents will also be introduced to the Parent Advisory Committee and their possibility of involvement

- **Parent Advisory Committee**

The parent advisory committee will be a committee of parents and/or guardians. It should start small, but it can grow overtime to include at least one parent per site. These parents will be advocates between ILA and the administration, as well as between ILA and their children. If multiply parents show interest from each site the group could meet approximately every 2 months. This committee will allow an avenue for Parents and ILA staff to discuss ideas to improve the program, attendance, etc. Parents will be able to express their concerns. They will also be asked to help improve visibility by talking to friends and co-workers and being our ears and eyes in the community for student opportunities, potential funders, etc. An online forum will be developed so parents who cannot attend meetings can have their input and concerns addressed and taken into consideration. To kick off the committee, we should have a meet and greet for the parents at each site.

- **Family Day**

Once a year at each site ILA can host a family day for students, their families, and all ILA site staff. This will be a day where ILA families and staff can work together participating in science and math activities. One idea would be a town science/math scavenger hunt. This would help increase bonding and parent's interest in their student's learning. Another suggestion is to

combine this initiative with BSAC to have them add a cultural aspect to a scavenger hunt or amazing race idea.

Alternatively, the family day could be a party in the form of an outdoor barbeque, which would provide opportunities for families to work together on a variety of math or science activities. This could be a more manageable and cost effective way to ingrain the idea of Family Day in people's minds, which will allow us to work up to arranging an Amazing Race type of activity in later years, when we have secured more involvement from families.

The final main goal for the 2011-2012 year is **Improved Mentor Commitment and Dedication**

Although we have had some extremely committed and impressive mentors this year we have also had many problems in the past with a low level of commitment, preparation and professionalism from mentors.

- The first way to improve Mentor Commitment and Dedication is to improve **Mentor Training**. We will start the year with an in depth Professional Development Seminar and have one more after the Christmas break. We will ensure that mentors have their assignments for the weekend well in advance so that they are sufficiently prepared by the time of the PD seminar.
- We will also create contact with Professors at all sites to have opportunities for mentors to have their activity presentation approved by a professor (this will only be absolutely necessary for activities not already approved at a PD session). I created an approval form for professors to fill out before a mentor may present an activity to students.
- A second method of improving mentor commitment and dedication is to ensure ample **Preparation** is being done and to have **Repercussions** in place for when mentors don't live up to their expectations. We will establish a contract regarding sufficient preparation. Mentors will need to agree to prepare for their activities an established number of days in advance as well as make requests for additional supplies an established number of days in advance. If a mentor fails to be properly prepared or make requests for supplies last minute there will be established consequences and repercussions that mentor's will have agreed upon as a part of their hiring documents. Exceptions to these rules will be made with advance notice – such as sickness, or unexpected exam changes, (mentors will be expected to figure out and relay their exam schedule as soon as it is available).
- A third way to improve mentor commitment and dedication is through **Team Building Days**. We will have scheduled days, at least one a semester, for mentors, coordinators, and any available staff to have a fun night together. This could be an evening at someone's home, bowling, going out for wings, etc. These activities will help to build a greater team atmosphere. If possible, they will be scheduled during a monitoring trip for the sites outside of Halifax to help build a friendly open atmosphere between program coordinators, mentors and Halifax office staff (There will be a cost to these nights – however, every effort will be made to keep expenses low while also remembering the

great benefits a happy team who works well together can grant the program, including the improved motivation to work more efficiently – thus reducing costs).

- A final initiative to improve mentor commitment and dedication will be to have regular **Performance and Curriculum Evaluation** of the mentors. We will have students at each site fill out short evaluation forms approximately every 10 weeks on the quality of the activity delivery, the perceived readiness of the mentors, and allow space for any praises or comments on areas to improve. The forms will be anonymous and will allow mentors and office staff to see how the students are gauging the program and to learn what is working and what changes need to be made.

## *Virtual-School Tutoring Program*

The Virtual-School Tutoring Program underwent many transformations in 2011. Relying on feedbacks from African Nova Scotian high school learners, school administrators, and our stakeholders, we abandoned the Marratech Video Conferencing platform, and adapted the virtual tutoring program delivery to the Blackboard Collaborate system through Dalhousie University Online Web Learning System. The Blackboard Collaborate system is internet based and is extensively used to deliver various education enhancement programs throughout Canada.

In addition to changing the virtual school program's delivery platform, we also developed a process to enhance the interaction between the program participants and their tutors. As such, we organized a meet and greet event on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 to initiate the building of a working rapport between the virtual school program participants and their tutors. Students from Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional School, Sydney Academy, Halifax West High School attended this event. In 2012, we expect the number of participating high school to increase even further when we implement the program at target schools throughout Nova Scotia.

The other important change that was implemented in the virtual school program, is the redesign of the tutoring schedule. In the previous schedule, a large number of the tutoring sessions, were offered between 11am and 2pm. The idea was that by offering the sessions at that time, students could get necessary help while they were still in school. However, many students preferred sessions that were offered 3pm. Taking this into consideration, we currently offer the majority of the virtual tutoring sessions between 5pm and 9pm.

We have also increased communication between the program staff, parents and the African Canadian community at large throughout the province. In this effect, three information session targeted at parents, and stakeholders in the African Canadian communities, took place in Sydney Cape Breton, Antigonish, Truro. At these events, program staff discussed the benefit of the program, and the role that parents can play in the successful implementation of the program.

Currently, the virtual school is being utilized at 30% capacity. Though this rate of utilization is much lower than expected, it is however higher than those of previous years. With the changes made to the program, which is discussed above, we anticipate a further increase in the number of participants as well as in the rate of utilization.

While many of the changes made to the program positively improved it, a number of challenges identical to those identified in the After-School Program have surfaced. If the Virtual School Program is to continue on its current successful transformation, these challenges must be addressed and mitigated. In this process, the following aspects should be emphasized.

- Time
  - Devise a way to mitigate the impact that the tutors class schedule can have on the virtual tutoring sessions.
  - Having a minimum of two tutors available per subject, will help reduce the any scheduling impact
  - Quarterly survey the students registered into the program about the hours of the week work best for them. We can then ensure that the most popular times requested are time we have tutors available.
- Mentors
  - Provide the tutors with resources that can enhance their tutoring skills
  - Assist mentors with resources and skills that will help them to effectively connect with the students.
  - Schedule one science field trip per semester with the students per region to help strengthen the relationship with the mentors.
    - This will allow the tutors to have some connection with the students outside the classroom setting. This could be for career days and have people come and speak with the students or students go and see careers in action (job shadowing)
- Equipment
  - With the anticipated increase in the number of registered students, an increase in the equipment used to delivery the programs is needed. Also we some of the current equipment are out dated, and therefore no longer efficient. They must be updated.
  - By having student register before the program begins, we can have an idea of student participation by school, thereby allowing for a more effective distribution of virtual school support equipment for students to sign out at the different target site.
- Exposure
  - More community involvement and program exposure through events
    - The virtual school program staff should increase their participation in various events that take place in African Canadian communities throughout Nova Scotia. This would increase the buy in to the program, which will enhance the effectiveness of this program.
  - Continue to produce the quarterly newsletters

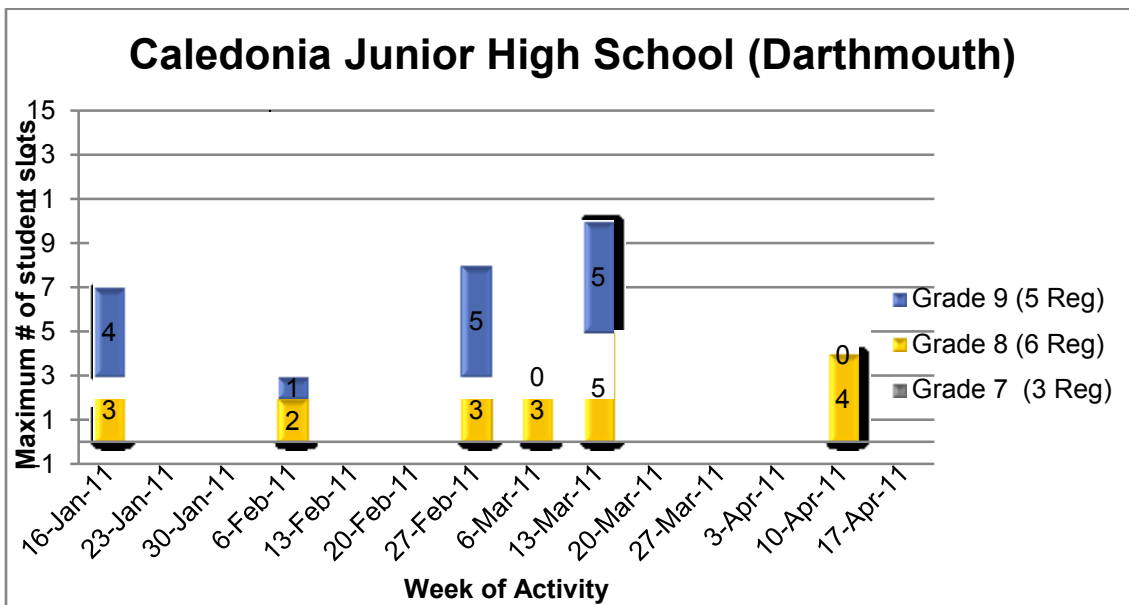
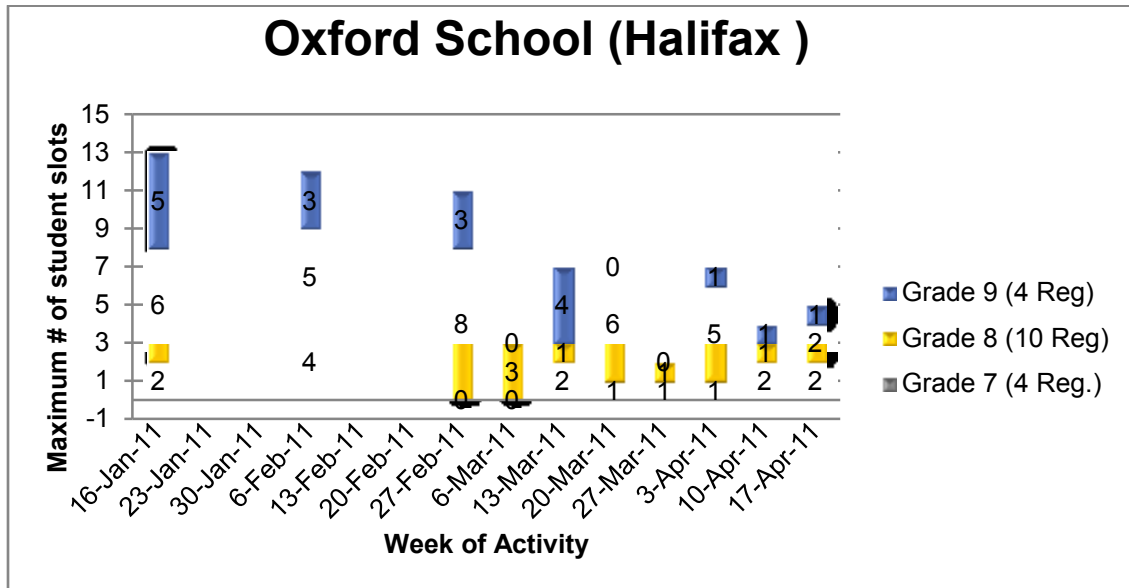
- Possibly have a section dedicated strictly to the Virtual School
- Distribute to local community centers like the YMCA, the BOYS and GIRLS club and other youth organizations; as well as to churches
- Distribute to other schools who have the potential of becoming a part of the program
- Use posters to announce the program/ advertise the program in the schools
- Website
  - Dedicate a section of ILA website to the virtual school program. This is will allow for promotion of upcoming events, as well as develop further supplemental internet based education tools

Increasing the exposure of the Virtual School Program within the community may help counteract the push back we are experiencing within the HRM region. This may allow for us to go around the school to target students and have parents come to us directly to have their child involved.

- School Relationship
  - Try to establish working relationships with school administrations
    - This would allow for schools to aid in encouraging student participation
    - Would allow for teachers and administrators to identify and recommend the program to students who would benefit from using the program. This can be done by actively going to schools to promote program

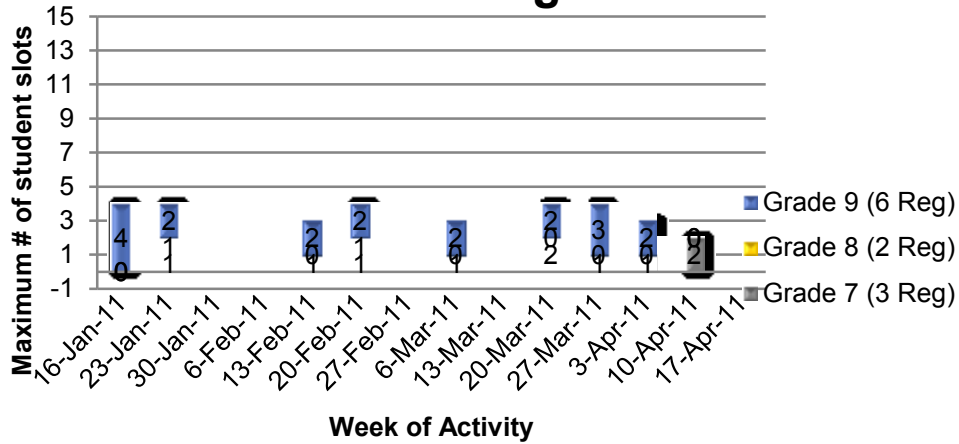
Appendix

Attendance

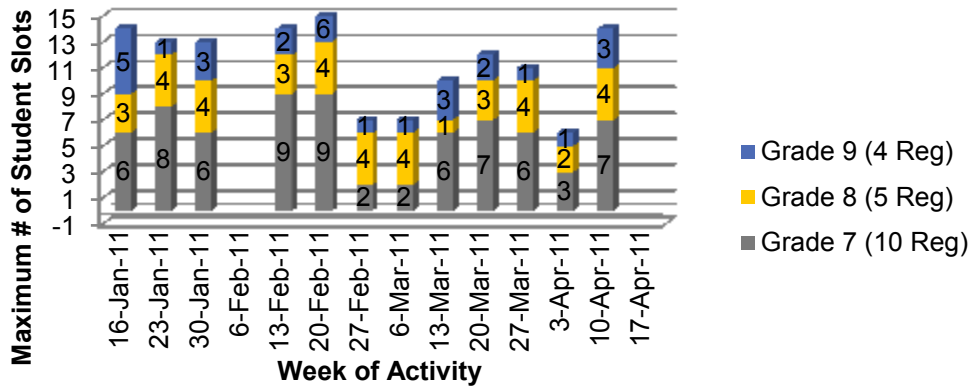




## Truro Junior High School



## Whitney Pier Memorial Junior High School (Sydney)



## St Andrew Junior School (Antigonish)

