



January
2019

Annapolis Valley
Regional Centre for Education

Monthly Update



Students from across AVRCE enrolled in Virtual Advanced Placement (AP) Biology recently completed diffusion and photosynthesis labs at Central Kings Rural High School. Registration is coming up soon for 2019-2020 AP courses, including a new AP Computer Programming course. To find out more about AP courses, visit <http://avrcevap.myavrce.ca/> and speak to your school counsellor.

Coming Up in January and Early February

- January 24: Nova Scotia Virtual School Exams
- January 27: National Family Literacy Day
- January 28-31: High School Exams
- February 1: First Day of High School Second Semester
- February 1-28: African Heritage Month 2019

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January News

With the holiday season wrapped up, we want to thank everyone in our school communities for generously supporting students and schools throughout the year, and especially in December. Many schools celebrated the season with special events and meals, which wouldn't be possible without the contributions of volunteers, staff and supportive communities.

We also thank our school communities for giving back through activities like food bank drives, and we are grateful to the many community organizations who support families throughout the year.



High school students are preparing to write exams later this month. Check out some tips for effective studying further in this report. We encourage parents/guardians to reach out to their child's teachers with questions at any time. We all want to help students be as prepared as possible for success!

This month, members of the AVRCE Regional Leadership Team will meet with each school principal to discuss planning for the upcoming year. These principal consultations are an annual process in our region, to gather important feedback for decision-making.

School Advisory Council Regional Meetings

Three meetings on School Advisory Councils (SACs) took place in December, providing parent-guardian group representatives with an overview of the role of SACs, including responsibilities, communications, funding and regulations. Feedback from these meetings was positive, and we look forward to further developing the role of SACs in our region.

For more information about your school's SAC or forming one at your school, please talk to your principal.



Virtual AP Classes Offer Challenges, Academic Rewards

Every Tuesday and Thursday morning from mid-September to mid-May, students in Jo-Leigh MacPhee's Advanced Placement (AP) Biology class meet for lessons, discussions and group work. They interact much like any other high school science class, with one exception; they only see each other in person once a month. This is a virtual class, where students from across the region receive instruction online.

"We do the same things you would do in a regular classroom—homework, assignments, tests—but in front of a computer," explains MacPhee, who has been teaching virtual AP Biology for three years. "The students are watching me lead the class, and they can turn their cameras on so I can see them, or to interact with each other." Once a month, they meet in person at Central Kings Rural High School to complete labs required for course outcomes.

AP courses offer a more challenging learning experience, similar to first-year university classes. Students may even receive university credits for successful completion of an AP course. MacPhee says courses like virtual AP Biology encourage skills that help students succeed in post-secondary studies.

"If a student is willing to do the hard work, taking on this challenge shows post-secondary institutions [they] are willing to take healthy risks and push themselves to try new and challenging things. The virtual nature of the course gives some flexibility, but also requires students to be self-motivated. Some topics have to be independently investigated and that allows students to pursue their own areas of interest within the scope of the course content."

Parent/Guardian Questions or Concerns?

If you are a parent/guardian and have a question or concern about something at your child's school, we want to work with you to resolve it. Please start by speaking with your child's teacher. The next step is to follow up with the principal, if needed. If more action is required, contact AVRCE at 902.538.4617. For more information, please visit www.avrce.ca/parentguardian-concerns.



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Regional Autism Team Supporting Inclusion

In 2018, a \$15 million provincial investment resulted in 21 new inclusive education specialist positions in our region, including a Program Planning Specialist focused on Autism supports. This position works closely with two Consultants of Student Services as part of a regional Autism team. Here's how the team works to prioritize the needs of students with Autism across the region:

The Consultants, Ruth Manning and Krista Lunn, work in collaboration with teachers, administrators, speech language pathologists and other school-based staff to develop programming plans and ideas that support a student's needs and learning. They also work with schools to make a student's transition into school, between schools and out of school as successful as possible.

The Program Planning Specialist, Annette Lewis, then works with schools as they put the consultants' plans into action. She is able to spend time at a particular school to guide staff, create materials, make plan adjustments, and build on-the-ground capacity.

Pilot Program Will Increase Exposure to ICT Careers

AVRCE is part of a pilot program aimed at promoting careers in information and communication technologies (ICT) in Nova Scotia. Digital Nova Scotia and the Discovery Centre recently launched the program, which will provide training to inform high school teachers about the ICT sector, thanks to funding from Salesforce.org. The program will also support student-focused events that highlight ICT careers.

December Celebrations in Schools

December is a special time in schools; students learn about cultural traditions that have celebrations in December, and many schools have special events that bring together school community members. Here are a few examples:

1. The Kings County Academy Student Support Worker program held a Kwanzaa celebration.
2. Primary students at Annapolis East Elementary learned about holiday traditions from around the world, such as St. Lucia crowns from Sweden.
3. & 4. Turkey dinners and shopping events, like this one at Port Williams Elementary (3.) and L.E. Shaw Elementary (4.), happen thanks to the efforts of staff and volunteers.
5. & 6. Many schools give back to the community through food bank drives, like this one at Windsor Forks District School (5.), and fundraisers to support families, such as this one (6.) organized by West Kings District High School Human Services 9 students.
7. Students in the Student Support Worker and Native Student Advisor Programs at Clark Rutherford Memorial School and Annapolis West Education Centre celebrated together by baking Kwanzaa cookies.
8. The Berwick District School band provided entertainment at the school's turkey dinner.
9. Windsor Elementary students sang carols for their neighbours at Dykeland Lodge



School Pantries Meet Student Needs, Provide Learning Opportunities

Annapolis County high schools, in collaboration with SchoolsPlus Annapolis, are implementing “school pantries” that offer access to food and other items students may need but cannot purchase themselves. Two of the first pantries to open are at Middleton Regional High School and Annapolis West Education Centre.

MRHS school counsellor Tara Coombs says the “Monarch Market” is already making a difference after opening in early December thanks to collaboration between staff, SchoolsPlus and the student council’s Community Outreach Group. “Students spend a lot of their lives at school, and a pantry is a great opportunity to help support them where they’re at,” says Coombs. Students can drop in between classes to access clothing, toiletries, and non-perishable food items. Coombs says next steps include a Community Outreach Group campaign to contact local businesses for donations, and a clothing swap to involve more students and reduce stigma around pantry use.

At AWEC, the school pantry was busy leading up to the holidays, receiving donations and providing items needed for the winter break. School Secretary and pantry organizer Deborah Hannam says, “I’ve never seen so many items dropped off to help! There’s been a brand new deep freezer from a school community member so we can store food, and we’ve had gifts so students had something for their parents or siblings under the Christmas tree, winter clothing, even linens. Our purpose is to have students comfortable coming to us to let us know if they need anything.”

Teacher Gail Harvey and her Éducation Civique 9 students are the other driving force behind the AWEC pantry. Managing the pantry is integrated with course outcomes; details about clients remain confidential, but the class is involved in all other organizing duties. Harvey explains, “The main outcome of the Éducation Civique class is, ‘how can you make a difference in your community? How can you contribute?’ It’s all about critical thinking, identifying needs in your community, and understanding why that need exists.”

Harvey says helping others is motivating for her students. “They’re a very compassionate bunch. They’re stocking shelves, sorting donations, labelling items. We had some guys who weren’t sure how to get involved, but they’ve built shelves and racks—everyone fits somewhere. It makes learning fun, and seeing the ‘feel-good’ feeling they get from helping someone else because they know it meets a need, it doesn’t get any better.”



Éducation Civique 9 students organizing the AWEC school pantry.

EXAM SURVIVAL GUIDE: EFFECTIVE STUDYING STRATEGIES

With exams approaching later this month, parents/guardians can help students make their studying time more productive by encouraging effective studying strategies like these:

1. PLAN YOUR STUDY TIME

Schedule time to study and try for the same time every day. Shorter daily sessions are better for memory than longer sessions. Break it up and choose a few different tasks (review notes, do practice questions, read, etc.). Set goals for what you want to accomplish.



2. PREPARE YOUR STUDY SPACE

Choose a comfortable space and have all your books and materials available. Maximize your memory by limiting distractions and interruptions. Turn off phones and social media!

3. READ TO REMEMBER, NOT JUST FINISH

Before you start, read chapter summaries and end-of-chapter questions. Review glossaries or word lists, and scan headings, text boxes, graphs etc. for important highlights. Don’t plow through to the end; break reading into shorter sections. Stop at the end of each section to verbally summarize and make notes.



4. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

Be sure to get adequate sleep, exercise, healthy food and some down time, too. If you get stuck while studying, a mental and physical break helps your brain to reset so you can get back on task.



For more studying tips, visit www.educationcorner.com/study-skills.html or check out *Study Smarter, Not Harder* by Kevin Paul.

Library Cards Boost Literacy at Home and School

Winter is the perfect time for curling up with a good book, and a library card makes it easy to find books and more for all ages. Accessing materials from your local library encourages reading for fun, which reinforces the literacy skills students develop in school.

Libraries are a great resource for school projects and research, and they also offer access to online homework help. You can even check out e-books or have items mailed to you for free.

There are twelve branches of the Annapolis Valley Regional Library. Drop in, call 1-866-922-0229 or visit <http://valleylibrary.ca/> to request a card and find out more. Happy reading!

