

October 2026 Newsletter

St. Stephen's Elementary School

3669 Highland Ave., Halifax, NS B3K 4J9

PRINCIPAL: Cindy Astephen **VICE PRINCIPAL:** Nicole Gerrard

ADMIN. ASSISTANT: Heather Cosgrove-Smith



Principal's & Vice Principal's Message

Dear St. Stephen's Elementary Families,

We had a wonderful start-up to the school year. Students spent time learning about safety procedures and our SSES Expectations Matrix.

Thank you to all families who were able to join us for our Ice-cream Social and Curriculum Night. If you were unable to attend, please reach out to your child's teacher for information.

Students participated in our first school assembly led by our grade 6 leaders. We are very proud of our grade 6 leaders who are leading announcements, assemblies, preparing class snack boxes and delivering lunches. We are lucky to have such a great group of student leaders this year.

If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns please reach out at any time.

Warmly,

Cindy Astephen Principal and Nicole Gerrard, Vice-Principal

What's New

We Still Need Lunch Monitors

Interested in becoming a lunch monitor? Lunch Monitors provide support and assistance to students during lunchtime activities under the direction of the school principal. The Lunch Monitor will oversee students in a variety of settings including the classroom, lunch area, and outside play areas. For more information, please contact our Admin Assistant, Mrs. Cosgrove-Smith at hcosgrove-smith@hrce.ca.

School Advisory Council (SAC) Meetings

Have you ever wanted to know more about how our school and regional centre operate? Consider joining our School advisory council (SAC). The

Upcoming Events

OCTOBER

1: Treaty Day - Culturally Significant Day - schools open

12: Thanksgiving Day - no classes all schools

23: NSTU Provincial conference day - no classes all schools

29: PTA Dance

October is Mi'kmaq History Month

October is Canadian Library Month

October 19-23: School Bus Safety Week

[List of yearlong dates](#) for your reference is linked.



October 2026

SAC is an advisory body to individual school principals, as well as the regional centres for education (RCEs). They provide recommendations on variety of issues related to their local school and the overall school system. Our SAC Executive has a few openings for those who are interested. Please contact the Principal, Cindy Astephen, at castephen@hrce.ca.

We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 5:15pm in the library from September–June (no meetings in December or March).

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Meetings

We are actively seeking parents to join our PTA!

Our Parent Teacher Association is a small but very active group of Parents/Guardians/Staff who strive to achieve these common goals:

1. To promote collaboration between parents/guardians and all school staff.
2. To support programs promoting the well-being and safety of students in the school
3. To promote an interest in, and a better understanding of, the educational curriculum at the school
4. To provide financial support to the school community to enhance the learning environment
5. To promote participation in school related activities by staff/parents/guardians and build community spirit.

Meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:15pm in the Library from September–June to talk about fundraising and planning for upcoming events – ALL ARE WELCOME!

Our next meeting is:

Nova Scotia School Lunch Program



We're looking forward to the 2026-27 launch of the Nova Scotia School Lunch Program! Beginning this school year, the program will be available in all public schools across the province.

Start date

Lunches at our school will begin on Tuesday, September 8.

Key dates for the first ordering cycle:

Ordering opens: Friday, August 28

Ordering closes: Wednesday, September 2, at noon

Registering and ordering

All lunches must be ordered through the online ordering system. To get started, visit www.NSLunch.ca and click "Order Now." Returning users can sign in using their existing account. More information, including instructions on how to create a diner account, is available at www.NSLunch.ca.



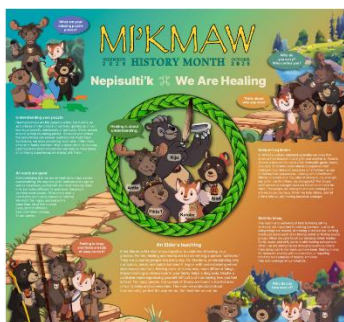
October 1 is Treaty Day

Treaty Day is an opportunity to learn, reflect and deepen our understanding of the historic and ongoing relationships between Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaq people in Nova Scotia.

Treaties are not simply part of our past. They are living agreements that continue to shape our shared responsibilities today. In schools, Treaty Day provides an important opportunity to help students understand Mi'kmaq history, culture, rights and perspectives, while exploring what it means to live together in a spirit of respect, partnership and reciprocity.

By continuing to learn about the Treaties and our responsibilities within them, we help build stronger relationships and contribute to the ongoing work of reconciliation.

October is Mi'kmaq History Month



Each October, Mi'kmaq History Month provides an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Mi'kmaq culture, history, language and traditions, while recognizing the important contributions of Mi'kmaq people past and present.

Across our schools, students and staff may mark the month through learning, storytelling, art, community connections and cultural experiences that bring Mi'kmaq perspectives into the classroom and school community.

As we learn together, Mi'kmaq History Month reminds us of the importance of listening, building relationships and continuing our shared commitment to truth and reconciliation. Learn more about Mi'kmaq History Month [here](#).



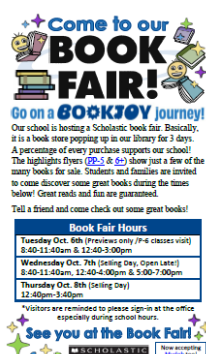
Fire Prevention Week: October 4-10

Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency is inviting families to take part in Fire Prevention Week, October 4–10. Visit halifax.ca/fpw to complete an online fire safety quiz. Want to win a Nintendo Switch, Apple products or LEGO sets? Participants who score 100% will be entered into a draw for a prize in their age category.

This year's theme, "Safe Charging is a Superpower," focuses on the safe use and charging of rechargeable devices powered by lithium-ion batteries. These batteries power many everyday devices, including phones, tablets, laptops, e-bikes and power

tools. If damaged or charged improperly, they can overheat and cause fires.

Visit halifax.ca/fpw for contest details, videos and fire safety resources, and take a few minutes to test your smoke alarms and review your home fire escape plan.



Scholastic Book Fair

Our school is hosting a Scholastic book fair. Basically, it is a book store popping up in our library for 3 days. A percentage of every purchase supports our school! The highlights flyers (PP-5 & 6+) show just a few of the many books for sale. Students and families are invited to come discover some great books during the times below! Great reads and fun are guaranteed. Tell a friend and come check out some great books! If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Makmillen at jmakmillen@hrce.ca.

Book Fair Hours	
Tuesday Oct. 6th (Previews only / P-6 classes visit)	8:40-11:40am & 12:40-3:00pm
Wednesday Oct. 7th (Selling Day, Open Late!)	8:40-11:40am, 12:40-4:00pm & 5:00-7:00pm
Thursday Oct. 8th (Selling Day)	12:40pm-3:40pm



October is a chance to celebrate the important role libraries play in our schools — and the Library Support Specialists who bring those spaces to life.

Every day, our school libraries help students discover new interests, build literacy skills, find reliable information and, sometimes, simply find a welcoming place to spend some time. Our Library Support Specialists are an important part of making that happen.

Canadian Library Workers Day is recognized on the third Friday of October, followed by Canadian School Library Day on the fourth Monday. These are great opportunities to recognize the people who help make our libraries' engaging, inclusive and supportive spaces for students.

Please join us in thanking our Library Support Specialist, Judy Makmillen for all she does to support students, staff and school communities.

Literacy Concerts 2026- 2027

This year's music concerts will be based on books! Each grade level will have a picture book that they bring to life on stage through music, drama, costumes, props and sets.

A book play is a slightly longer performance therefore, we will be creating two concerts:

- **December 10th for grades Primary to Grade 3**
- **May 6th for Grade 4 to Grade 6.**

There is likely to be a strings and band performance at the beginning of the May 6th concert, and there will also be opportunities for volunteers from the upper grades to support the lower grades during their concert with ukulele, recorder and narration. Volunteers from Grade 6 band will also have a special role to play!

This is a big project with amazing opportunities for our students to shine- and we need your help! If you would like to volunteer to help the students out with set design, costumes, props, lighting or sound, please email Mrs. Haughian at Bhaughian@hrce.ca

October 19-23 is School Bus Safety Week



Every school day, thousands of HRCE students rely on the bus to get to and from school safely.

School Bus Safety Week is a chance to highlight the simple habits that help keep everyone safe — from waiting well back from the road, to following the driver's instructions, to staying alert around stopped school buses.

With more than 33,000 HRCE students travelling on more than 400 buses each day, safety depends on all of us: students, families, drivers, schools and motorists. This week is a good opportunity to review a few everyday reminders and help reinforce safe routines on the bus, at the stop and on the road.

Bus Stop Safety

- Be on time for the bus and please don't run to/from the bus.
- Stand back off the road and don't push or shove when waiting at a stop.
- Always cross in front of the bus. Walk three metres (10 feet) in front of the bus to a point where you can see the driver and wait for the driver's signal to cross. Proceed to the centre of the road, STOP, LOOK & LISTEN and cross the road when it is safe.
- Never crawl under a school bus or cross the road behind the bus.
- Know the danger zones around the bus.

School Bus Safety

- Please respect and listen to the driver and avoid distracting them.
- Please keep noise levels to a minimum.
- Do not stand or move seats while the bus is in motion.
- Never put your hands, arms, feet or head out of the bus window.
- Ask the driver for permission before you open the bus windows.
- Do not throw anything inside the bus or out of the windows.
- Keep the aisle clear at all times when the bus is in motion.

Remember: In Nova Scotia, it's illegal to pass a school bus when its red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended.

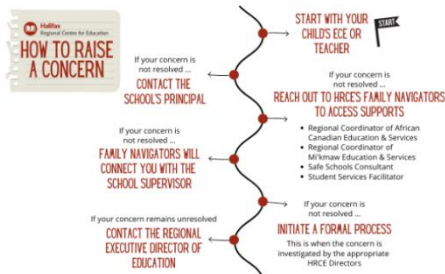
You can find out more information about riding the school bus in HRCE [here](#).

Do you know how to raise a concern?

Did you know that there's a protocol in place to help families contact schools or the HRCE office when you have concerns about your students' education or well-being?

- All concerns should first be shared with your child's teacher.
- If your concern is not resolved, you should then contact the principal.
- If your concern remains unresolved, you can reach out to HRCE's [Family Navigators](#) who can provide information about a wide range of supports and resources.
- If your matter continues to be unresolved, you can then initiate a formal review process in which the matter will be investigated by the appropriate HRCE Directors.
- The final step is for your concern to be passed on to the Regional Executive Director.

[Click here](#) to learn more.



Power Outage Information for Families

As we move into the winter months, we want to share how decisions are made when a school experiences a power outage. Our priority is always to keep schools open safely when possible. A power outage does not automatically mean classes are cancelled – even if it happens during the school day. The decision depends on when power is expected to be restored.

Here's what happens When a school loses power, HRCE's Operations Team contacts Nova Scotia Power to gather available details on the cause and an estimated restoration time.

Once we have this information, we consider:

- **Before school starts:** Have buses begun their routes? If so, we wait until students arrive before making a decision. If classes are cancelled, elementary families will be contacted before dismissal.
- **During the school day:** How close is dismissal? What is the temperature in the building? Does the school rely on power for water or septic systems? These factors, among others, help us decide whether to stay open or close. Often, power returns faster than we could safely send students home.

If classes are cancelled:

- HRCE will notify families by email and text.
- Families of elementary students will also receive a phone call before dismissal.
- Deciding to close schools during a power outage is never simple, but safety is always our top priority. We understand that cancellations can be inconvenient, and our goal is to keep students learning in class whenever possible.
- More information about school cancellations for any reason can be found [here](#).

Growing independence doesn't have to start with a smartphone

As children get older, parents naturally want to give them more independence, such as walking to the park, playing at a friend's house, staying home for a short time, or getting to activities on their own. A smartphone can seem like the obvious way to make this possible, but it isn't the only option.

There are lots of ways families can give children more freedom while keeping communication simple and age-appropriate:

- **Long-range walkie-talkies:** A simple way for kids to check in while playing in the neighbourhood or exploring outdoors, without access to the internet or social media.
- **A home phone:** Allows children to call friends, make plans or contact a parent when they're home alone.
- **A kids' smartwatch:** Some watches offer limited calling or messaging, without the apps, social media and internet access of a smartphone.
- **A basic talk-and-text phone:** When children eventually need a way to coordinate rides or activities, a simple phone can provide communication without introducing the distractions and social pressures of a smartphone.

The goal is to match the technology to what children actually need. A child who needs to call home doesn't necessarily need a device that also gives them access to social media, games and the internet.

Starting with a more limited device can give children time to develop the responsibility, judgment and independence they'll eventually need to manage a smartphone.

Explore more resources from Unplugged Canada and join thousands of Canadian families taking the [Unplugged Canada Pledge](#) to delay smartphones and support connected childhoods.