

Upcoming Events: January

Jan 5: First Day back for students

Jan 13: SAC 6-7pm/HSA 7-8pm

Jan 14 & 15: SJAM Basketball try outs for grades 4-6

Jan 12-16: SJAM Spirit Week

Other Notable Dates:

January 4: National Ribbon Skirt Day

January 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday

January 20: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 27: International Holocaust Remembrance Day

January 27: Family Literacy Day

école ST. JOSEPH'S A. McKay School

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Follow us on X @SJAMSchool & The SJAM Home & School Facebook Page.

Dear SJAM Families:

Happy New Year and welcome to 2026! We hope you had a joyful and restful winter break and that you're feeling ready for an exciting second half of the school year. January is a time for new beginnings and a great opportunity to reset and refocus!

Just as students need reminders about expectations and routines, we also want to share some important reminders for families. The most important one: **we are partners in your child's education.** When we call or email to follow up on something, please believe us! Trust that we have your child's best interests at heart and want to work together for your child's success. A familiar conversation students will hear from school staff is that everyone experiences bumps in the road and those bumps do not define us. When the bumps happen, we take accountability, learn from it and the slate is cleared. As education staff, we continue to use conversation and modelling to guide and direct students and if we reach a point where that is not working, we rely heavily on you as families to be essential in supporting students in knowing and understanding the importance of listening to the adults in the school—for their safety and learning.

Before the break, we noticed a challenge with students arguing with adults about wearing winter clothing. Please remind your child that coats, hats, and mitts are necessary for outdoor time. Of course, we consider age and stage of development and are here to help and give reminders, but we cannot chase students around to ensure they are dressed appropriately, nor will we engage in a back and forth.

Attached to this email, you'll find:

- **Bus Expectations** for safe transportation
- **Our School-Wide Matrix**
- **Nova Scotia Code of Conduct Policy**

Please make sure you are continuing conversations about these items with your child (s). While we recognize that every student learns differently and has a right to an education, we must also consider the impact of incidents on the overall learning environment. Administration is always available to meet and discuss concerns; however, please remember that there are statutes, policies and guidelines that prevent us from disclosing information about students that are not under your care. These can be found under the Nova Scotia Education Act and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Education (EECD).

Thank you for your continued partnership in making SJAM a safe, inclusive, and supportive place for all students. Together, let's keep fostering an environment where kindness, responsibility, and teamwork shine.

Here's to a fantastic start to 2026!

School Power Outages

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](#).

Inclement Weather



Did you know? HRCE takes great care when making the decision to alter the regular operations of schools and school buses in the event of severe or inclement weather.

It is HRCE's goal to communicate any changes to the regular operations of schools and/or buses as close to 6:00 a.m. as possible. **A 6:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- All schools are delayed in opening by two hours and bus pickups are delayed by two hours; or
- All schools are open, but some or all busses are not operating for the day; or
- Some schools (either individually or by family) are closed for the day; or
- All schools are closed for the day.

If weather deteriorates, or is forecasted to worsen throughout the morning, **an 11:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- Bussed students will be picked up two hours earlier than their regular dismissal time; and
- Walking students will be dismissed at their regularly scheduled lunch hour.

How will I find out?

- By email to the addresses in PowerSchool

- By text message, **if you have opted-in**. If you aren't sure if you have opted-in, text Y to the following number: **978338**
- [On the HRCE website](#)
- [On Instagram](#)

It's important to always have a plan in place for childcare in the event of any cancellation. Please remember: As a parent or guardian you always have the choice of whether or not to send your child to school.

For more information on how HRCE manages during inclement weather, visit hrce.ca/families/cancellations.

[International Holocaust Remembrance Day](#)



International Holocaust Remembrance Day, observed on January 27, serves as a crucial reminder of the Holocaust.

Through survivor stories, students learn empathy, compassion, and the importance of standing against antisemitism and prejudice. By observing this day, we ensure future generations uphold human rights and dignity, fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.

[Family Literacy Day](#)

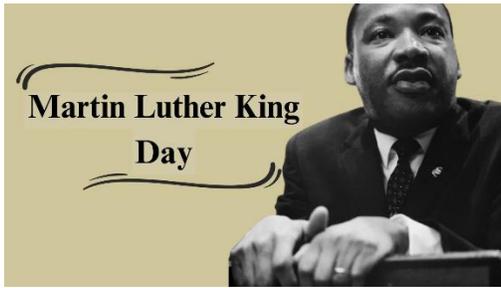


Did you know? January 27 is Family Literacy Day! This special day is meant to raise awareness about the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family.

This year's theme is "Make Mealtime Family Learning Time!" Preparing for mealtimes is a fun (and tasty) way for families to learn together. Whether it's following recipes, making shopping lists, or sharing stories at the dinner

table, make your mealtime family learning time. For more information including fun family activities, click [here](#).

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day



Martin Luther King Day, often abbreviated as MLK Day, honors the civil rights leader and activist, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It is observed on the third Monday of January each year, close to Dr. King's birthday on January 15th. The day serves as a time for reflection, community service, and the celebration of Dr. King's contributions to the civil rights movement.

Monday January 19th, 2026, is a day to remember and celebrate the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; an opportunity to reflect on the ongoing struggle for civil rights, equality, and justice.

Some ways families can celebrate:

- **Engage in Community Service:** Participate in volunteer activities or service projects that benefit your community, aligning with Dr. King's commitment to social justice.
- **Educational Activities:** Learn more about the civil rights movement and Dr. King's work through books, documentaries. **Are there members of your community, in Nova Scotia, or Canada who exemplify Dr. King's message? Take some time to learn about them as well!**
- **Reflect on Social Justice:** Take time to reflect on the progress made in the fight for civil rights and consider how you can contribute to a more just society.
- **Spread Awareness:** Share Dr. King's messages of equality, love, and nonviolence on social media to inspire others.

SJAM Sports



Basketball: Team Tryouts will be held starting January 13th & 14th for students in grades 4-6.

Information Letters will go home the first week back. If your child is interested remind them to see Ms. Lucas, Mme. Swinamer, or Ms. Young for more information.

Once the team is chosen more detailed information will be sent out to families.

[SJAM Spirit Week!](#)



From January 12-16th, the whole school will participate in activities for Spirit Week. This fun week will bring us together as a whole school, to support our well-being goal and continue to enrich our school culture. Here is the schedule:

Monday January 12: SJAM Colors Day-Dress in blue and yellow!

Tuesday January 13: Beach Day- Wear sunglasses, hat, beach shirts, etc. (no swimsuits)!

Wednesday January 14: Backwards Day-Wear your shirt or hat backwards (no hoodies on backwards covering face for safety)!

Thursday January 15: Favorite Color Day-Wear your favorite color from head-to-toe

Friday January 16: PJ Day- Wear your Pajamas or comfy clothes

[SJAM School Advisory Council \(SAC\)/Home & School Association \(HSA\)](#)

Both our School Advisory Council and Home & School Association are completely organized by wonderful staff, family, and community volunteers who continually give of their time and expertise each month to improve and maintain a safe, fun, and inclusive learning environment for all SJAM students. The

next meeting will be the evening of January 13th (6-7pm for SAC & 7-8pm for HSA)

In the meantime, if you'd like to become a member please reach out to either the Principal, Cheyanne Gorman-Tolliver (Ms. T) at cgorman-tolliver@hrce.ca or our council and committee chairs, Jamesie Coolican (SAC) at hrce-sac-sjam@gnspe.ca and Erin Galliot (Home & School Association) at sjamhomeandschool@hotmail.com



Learn About Influenza

Learn about the Influenza vaccine

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE FLU VACCINE

- Influenza (the flu) is virus that peaks in transmission in the fall and winter months
- Most people are mildly ill when they contract the flu but sometimes the flu can be serious and require admission to the hospital
- Children under 6 years are at the highest risk of serious complications from the flu
- The flu and RSV can occur at the same time making children more at risk of needing hospitalization
- The flu vaccine is recommended yearly for children 6 months and older to protect against serious complications of the flu

Scan to book



FLU VACCINE SAFETY

- The flu vaccine cannot cause the flu
- Serious side effects are rare, effecting less than 1 in 1000 people
- Common side effects include pain and swelling at the insertion site



HOW TO BOOK YOUR VACCINE

- In Nova Scotia, flu vaccines can be booked online and are free of cost
- You can also call to book at 1-833-797-7772. If you or your child does not have a health card, please call rather than booking online



On behalf of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness.

Fast Facts about the Flu Vaccine

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For more information, [click here](#).

Online Platform Risks

APPS EVERY PARENT SHOULD BE AWARE OF un-plugged Canada

<p>SNAPCHAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappearing messages • Snap Map location sharing • Addictive features (streaks) • Sexting & adult contact 	<p>INSTAGRAM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body-image pressure • Hidden DM requests • Teens use secret "Finstas" • Exposure to adult content
<p>ROBLOX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate games • Unmoderated private servers • Chat with strangers • Pressure to buy Robux 	<p>TIKTOK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly addictive feed • Harmful viral trends • Attention fragmentation • Frequent adult content
<p>DISCORD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High grooming risk • Adult/NSFW content • Harassment & cyberbullying • Unmoderated servers 	<p>YOUTUBE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate content • High risk of grooming • Addictive short form content • Attention fragmentation
<p>CHARACTER AI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexualized roleplay bots • High grooming-style risk • Fake "AI relationships" with kids • Encourages secrecy from parents 	<p>TELEGRAM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encrypted hidden content • Large, risky group chats • Minimal moderation • Hard for parents to monitor
<p>REDDIT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfiltered communities • Adult/disturbing content • Harmful topics easily found • Anonymous users & predators 	<p>CHATGPT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids may overshare personal info • Mature themes can appear • Emotional dependence on AI • Hard for parents to monitor use

Before you let your child use a platform, create an account using their age and explore it yourself to see the content and interactions they'll be exposed to.

Sharing on behalf of Unplugged Canada

Many digital platforms today, including social media, online gaming and AI chat tools, are designed to keep kids scrolling and engaged, often exposing them to addictive features, adult content, and interactions they may not be developmentally ready to handle.

Below is a resource that outlines some of the most common social media, gaming, and AI chat platforms, helping families better understand the risks, start meaningful conversations at home, and consider delaying smartphones and access to these apps until kids are more developmentally ready.

You can access the full resource [here](#).

Unplugged Canada is a parent-led, national movement advocating for healthier childhoods by delaying smartphones and social media until kids

are more developmentally ready. Join thousands of Canadian families choosing to delay by taking the Unplugged Canada Pledge at unpluggedcanada.com/sign-pledge.

That's it for this month!
Your SJAM Admin Team