

District Review Report

School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake)

April 18 - 21, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Harry Janzen, Superintendent, School District No. 70 (Alberni)

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District Name:	Kootenay Lake
District Number:	8
Superintendent:	Brian Butcher
Date of Visit:	April 18 - 21, 2005
Team Chair:	Harry Janzen, Superintendent, SD 70 (Alberni)
Team Members:	Valerie Broman, Parent, SD 23 (Central Okanagan) Cathy Elliott, Consultant, Program Development, Ministry of Education Larry Espe, Assistant Superintendent, SD 60 (Peace River North) Judi Haines, Principal, SD 22 (Vernon) Mary-Anne Neal, Project Coordinator, Ministry of Education Sandra O'Donovan, Teacher, SD 59 (Peace River South) Ian Strachan, Principal, SD 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows) Linda Underwood, Vice-Principal, SD 64 (Gulf Islands) Afton Wright, Senior Evaluation Advisor, Ministry of Education

Context

School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) is a rural District comprising many unique communities spread over a large geographic area. The District's 5,600 students attend 26 schools, many of them with small enrolments. Most students are bused to school.

The District has experienced, and will continue to experience, significant declining enrolment. Nevertheless, the Board has made a commitment to maintaining and enhancing rural schools in its many diverse communities. The District amalgamation of nine years ago continues to present challenges to building shared vision and values.

Four hundred and nineteen (7.5%) of the District's students are of Aboriginal ancestry and are widely dispersed among schools. There is one First Nations Community in the District, the Lower Kootenay Indian Band, just south of Creston. The District enrolls 50 English as a Second Language students and has an expanding International student program.

Summary of Process

The major purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the District, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the District's work in improving student achievement. The specific purposes of the review are to:

- Review school district and school achievement data;
- Review the school district accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement;

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- Determine the capacity of the school district to support schools in improving student achievement;
- Make recommendations to the school district and to the Minister about improving student achievement; and
- Identify promising practices that might assist other school Districts and schools in their plans to improve student achievement.

In addressing these objectives, the Team reviewed the District's Accountability Contract, Ministry data related to the District and schools, and individual school plans.

At the outset of the review the Team attended an informal dinner meeting with trustees, District staff and partner group representatives. At the introductory formal session, District staff presented the Review Team with an overview of areas of strength, special needs programming, Aboriginal education, challenges, and the District Accountability Contract.

At the request of the District, the Team visited all schools to discuss their plans according to the Ten Points of Inquiry. These meetings included School Planning Council representatives and members of the school community.

Members of the Team also met with representatives of the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) and Aboriginal Education representatives.

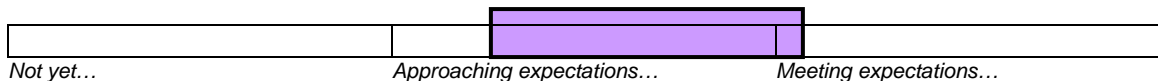
At the conclusion of the review visit, the Team met with trustees, District senior management and other school and community representatives to present a draft of the Review Report.

The Team appreciated the warm and positive reception provided throughout the District during the review process. The pride which parents and community have in their schools is evident throughout the District.

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*

Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.

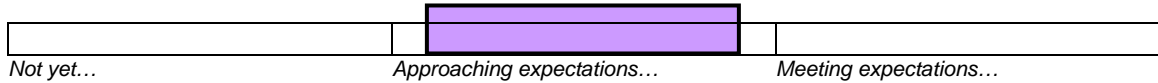


- The District Literacy goal, particularly with regard to writing, provides a strong instructional focus for schools.
- There are no District or school goals relating to Aboriginal education.
- Many school goals are relevant, based on evidence, and focused on student achievement.
- A few schools have objectives which are specific, and they promote strategies to achieve them.

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2. *Rationale:*

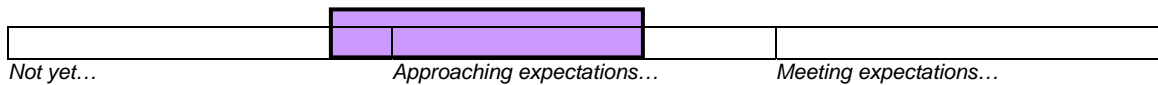
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The District Literacy goal, particularly with regard to writing, is based on a variety of data sources and clearly linked to student achievement.
- Many schools did not articulate the evidence which led to school goals in their school plans; however, most schools were able to explain their rationales during meetings with the Team.
- Most District and school goals relating to numeracy and human and social development were not based on multiple sources of data.

3. *Data:*

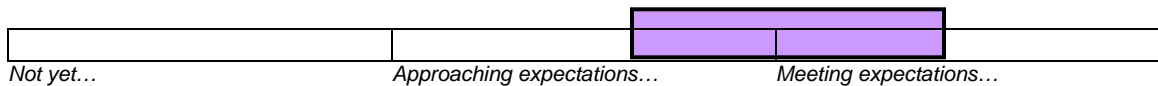
Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the district goals and is used to monitor progress.



- Most schools are using Performance Standards-based assessments to inform instruction.
- Most schools are facing challenges finding multiple sources of data and tracking trends over time to inform school planning.
- Some schools are disaggregating data but few are using this information to develop specific objectives.
- There is a lack of district-generated data to inform school planning.

4. *Strategies:*

Improving Districts and schools have focused, well organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.

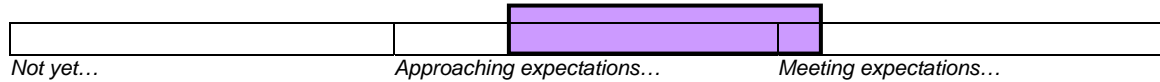


- The District provides strong support for the development of research-based instructional strategies focused on writing.
- Most schools have strategies connected to their school goals but not always to specific objectives.
- Many schools monitor classroom data and adjust strategies accordingly.

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5. *Structures:*

Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



- Most schools align structures to support student achievement in the areas of highest need.
- Many schools demonstrate creativity and flexibility to adjust structures in response to student achievement needs.
- The District differentiates resources based on school size but not to address the areas of highest need for improvement.

6. *Results:*

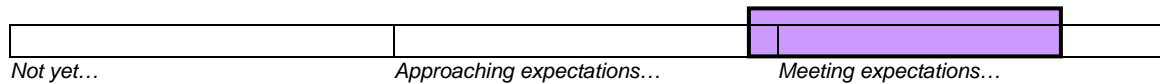
Improving districts and schools monitor and make adjustments to get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- Many classroom teachers and schools monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement.
- The District is monitoring writing results to establish trends over time.

7. *Communication:*

Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



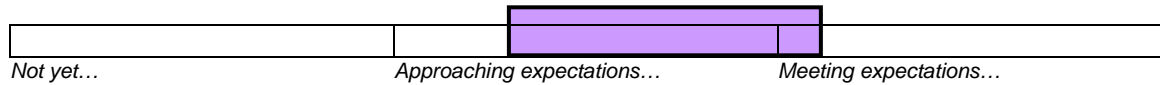
- Most schools use newsletters, media, Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings, web sites and informal networks to communicate school goals and student achievement.
- Many School Planning Councils are engaged in informed dialogue about student achievement.
- Schools clearly value community input regarding goals and objectives.

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8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*

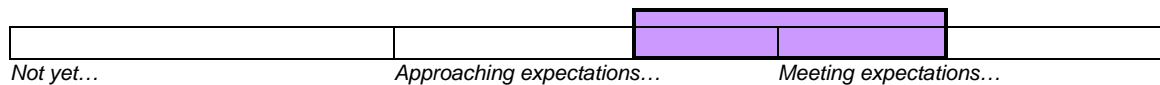
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued.



- Schools reflect their unique characteristics in their school goals.
- Many schools indicated the need for increased District interaction in order to connect school goals with District direction.

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement:*

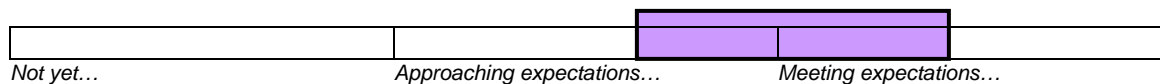
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- Many schools have exemplary involvement from School Planning Councils, Parent Advisory Councils and other parent groups to improve student achievement.
- A few schools have yet to develop parental involvement beyond School Planning Councils and Parent Advisory Councils.
- The district-wide planning day in April encourages team planning for student achievement.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*

Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.



- There is strong leadership within schools by staff, students and parents.
- In many schools, teams of educators, parents and students are working together to improve student achievement.
- Some schools seek greater connection to District leadership.

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Strengths

The Team commends the District for the following strengths relating to student achievement:

- The flexibility and creativity of school structures.
- The extent to which differentiated instruction at the elementary and secondary levels addresses the diversity of learners and individual student needs.
- District leadership with regard to the implementation of Performance Standards-based instructional strategies for writing.
- The strong collaboration and sharing of strategies within most schools.
- Widespread evidence of assessment **for** learning in schools.
- The progress being made in addressing substantial geographical obstacles.

Promising Practices

The Team recognizes the following school practices that could be helpful to other schools with a similar focus:

- **Multi-grade groupings** in schools change as small-group instruction is needed. Up to three grades are combined for short periods of instruction to allow one-on-one or very small-group learning.
- **2-4-C Committee:** Parents and students track Social Responsibility data over time, design and adapt strategies. On an ongoing basis, parents, students and school staff team up “To Fore-See” challenges, identify and resolve issues as they arise.
- As local or global issues arise, a **whole-school forum** is convened to discuss, make recommendations and resolve the situation. The forum is often initiated and facilitated by students.
- All teachers on a school staff administer a **confidential classroom survey** to their students in order to elicit feedback on their teaching style and classroom culture. Results inform the manner in which teachers model Social Responsibility and also assist each teacher in developing a Personal Growth Plan.

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Recommendations

The Team respectfully suggests the following to strengthen the school and District focus on student achievement and for improving results:

- Increase District staffing to support schools in areas such as assessment, data collection and analysis, goal and objective setting, and strategy implementation.
- Establish and require common assessments in literacy and numeracy to ensure reliability and validity and to provide more sources of data for planning.
- Establish procedures for the collection and aggregation of data relevant to school and District goals.
- Provide guidance to school staffs regarding the use and analysis of multiple sources of data for planning.
- Facilitate opportunities for inter-school collaboration regarding goal setting, data analysis and strategy development.
- Develop District Aboriginal student achievement goals and objectives to guide strategies at the school level.
- Explore alternate templates for school plans.