

District Review Report

School District No. 10 (Arrow Lakes)

May 16-18, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Gordon Milne, Superintendent, School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)

**District Review Report
2004/2005**

District Name:	Arrow Lakes
District Number:	10
Superintendent:	Walter Posnikoff
Date of Visit:	May 16-18, 2005
Team Chair:	Gordon Milne, Superintendent, SD 91 (Nechako Lakes)
Team Members:	Margaret Furnell, SD 85 (Vancouver Island North) Clemens Rettich, Principal, SD 50 (Haida Gwaii / Queen Charlotte) Marguerite Stone, Ministry of Education Natalie Trueit, Parent, SD 54 (Bulkley Valley)

Context

School District No. 10 (Arrow Lakes) is a small, rural, dispersed district in southeastern B.C. with 657.2 FTE students served by 5 schools: Burton Elementary is a K-7 school with 46.5 FTE students, Edgewood Elementary is a K-4 school with 11 FTE students, Lucerne Elementary-Secondary is a K-12 school with a population of 145 FTE students, Nakusp Elementary is a K-7 school with 241 FTE students, Nakusp Secondary is an 8-12 school with a population of 213 FTE students, and there are 4 home school registrants in the district. Of the 657.2 FTE students, there are 72 students (10.9% of the population) identified as special needs. This includes 46 learning-disabled, high incidence students, 12 low incidence students and 14 intensive or moderate behaviour students.

The District serves three incorporated municipalities of Silverton, New Denver, and Nakusp and 5 unincorporated areas of Hills, Trout Lake, Burton, Fauquier, and Edgewood.

In the past few years, the District has experienced a decrease in student population, from approximately 785.75 students in 2000 to 657.2 students in 2004, a 16.4% decrease in a four year period. Staff reductions, school closure and District restructuring were employed to minimize the corresponding decrease in revenues of nearly 1 million dollars. Currently, the District employs 40.72 FTE teachers, 5 principals/vice-principals, 33.2 FTE support staff workers and 3.0 FTE excluded staff.

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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;
- 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 Review Team reviewed the District's Accountability Contract, Ministry data related to the District, and individual School Improvement Plans.

At the outset of the Review, the Superintendent, Principals, Vice-Principals, Trustees, and Committee of the Whole representatives provided an overview of the District, its programs and the individual schools. This overview provided the Team with an understanding of the unique features of the District, the challenges being faced and the passion and commitment of the district community.

The Team visited all schools and met with School Planning Councils (SPCs). As well, the Team met with the President of the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC).

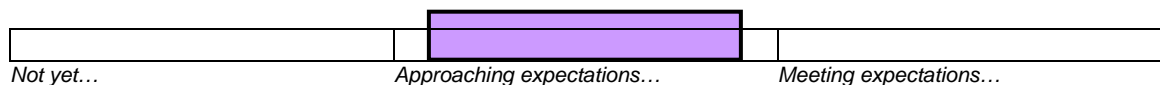
At the conclusion of the Review, the Team met with school district administration, Trustees, Committee of the Whole representatives and representatives of Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) to provide an overview of the District Review Report.

The Team experienced a warm, welcoming and open reception provided throughout the visit and would like to extend its appreciation to the District and school communities.

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.

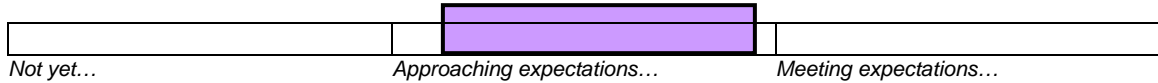


- District goals, and goals in most schools, focus on student achievement.
- Some goals are not articulated to show a clear relationship to student achievement.
- Some schools have designed objectives to support their goals.
- The team did not observe a consistent standard for school plan development.

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2. *Rationale:*

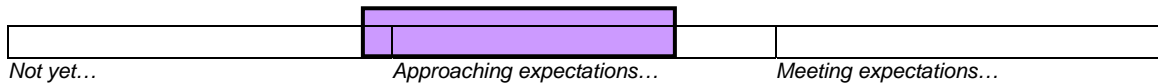
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- Some schools have data-based evidence for the selection of goals.
- The District is supporting schools in becoming evidence based.
- Some schools are using multiple sources of evidence that are clearly linked to student achievement.

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.



- There is growing evidence of analysis, interpretation and reporting of data.
- The District and schools recognize that multiple sources of data are important to student achievement analysis.
- Reporting in percentages conveys little information about student achievement due to small numbers.
- Most schools are using BC Performance Standards for writing to gather evidence of student achievement.
- Few examples of disaggregated data were observed.

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.

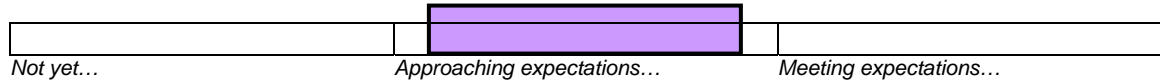


- Some schools have yet to effectively articulate the link between school goals, chosen strategies and desired results.
- Some schools have been innovative in developing strategies that address the uniqueness of their school community.
- Some schools adjust instruction as a result of professional development.
- The District does not yet have a coordinated approach to staff development.
- The District is differentiating resource allocation to enhance the development of strategies in the areas of highest need.

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5. *Structures:*

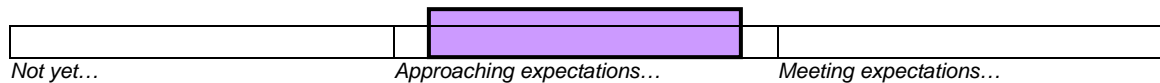
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



- Some schools have changed structures to support their goals.
- The District and some schools have been innovative in creating structures to support learning in spite of challenging financial constraints.
- There is evidence of alignment of district structures with broad community and regional initiatives.
- The District is working towards differentiating resource allocation to enhance structures in the areas of highest need.

6. *Results:*

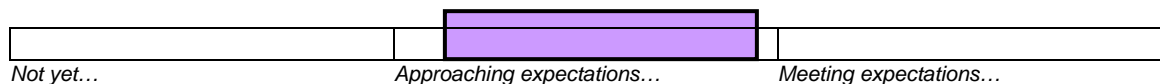
Improving districts and schools monitor and make adjustments to get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- Schools are generally monitoring results and most schools are beginning to look for baselines and trends.
- Schools are beginning to use results to inform instruction in the classroom.
- There is growing evidence that adjustments to date have led to improved results.

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.



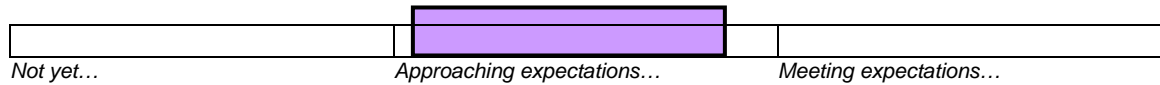
- While schools communicate in a variety of ways, general knowledge of district and school goals, student achievement and progress is limited.
- Some schools have not been successful in obtaining input from partners not already involved in a specific partner group.
- There is a commitment to engage all partner groups and the communities in dialogue about student achievement despite geographic challenges.
- Most schools have welcoming environments which foster communication.
- Some schools are successful in making district and educational information available to all partners.

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8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*

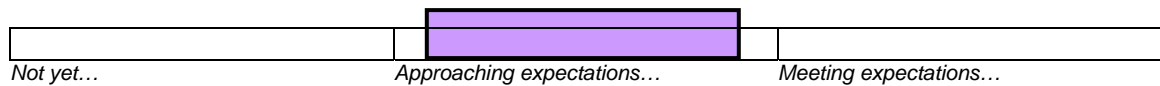
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued.



- There is an inclusive and collaborative culture connecting schools, communities, and the District.
- There is an appreciation at the school level of the support provided by the District in spite of the District's financial challenges.
- There is fiscal support from the District for school plans.

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement:*

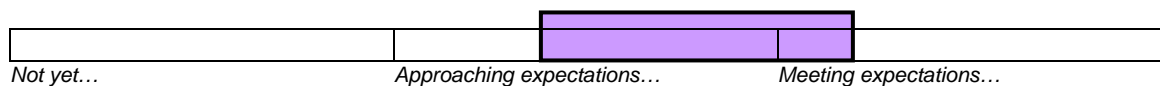
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- Many parents are involved in activities that support school goals and initiatives.
- The District is providing resources to support School Planning Councils in their work to improve student achievement.
- Parent Advisory Councils are actively involved in the review of school plans.
- School Planning Councils are functioning in each school but are at different stages of development.

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.



- The Committee of the Whole is recognized as an effective structure for supporting the District and school planning process.
- The District models shared leadership, collegiality and the importance of positive relationships.
- The District is building the capacity of leaders throughout the district, including students, parents, community members and school staff members.

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Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement at specific schools:

- Community interest, support and involvement has been successfully captured by the District
- “Moving beyond a learning community to becoming a community of learners”
- Community and school support for early literacy initiatives, for example “Ready, Set, Learn”
- Location of preschool programs in some school buildings
- Collaboration with community groups to leverage resources to enable joint partnerships focused on student achievement
- Acknowledgement of ‘smallness’ as an advantage to add value to students’ learning
- Distributed leadership in the School District to work towards student achievement despite financial challenges
- District support and encouragement for teacher learning
- School and district tracking of cohorts
- Good continuity and participation on School Planning Councils in most schools
- Many opportunities for student involvement and leadership
- High level of staff commitment to school goals and strategies in most schools
- Very high level of participation in school sports at Nakusp Secondary School
- Clear success of literacy initiatives

Promising Practices

District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:

- District Writers’ Festival
- Integrated Community Model Development including Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy programs
- “Spring And Fall Into Learning” program at Lucerne Elementary Secondary School

Recommendations

Team recommendations for strengthening school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results.

- Enhance baseline data to enable measurement of the success of goals
- Adopt and implement a common Kindergarten assessment tool
- Expand the use of Performance Standards in classrooms
- Explore further opportunities to differentiate resource allocation to support special needs students
- Seek regional solutions to the delivery of Special Education services
- Explore ways to more closely align school and district goals without compromising school uniqueness
- Implement a common template for school plans
- Initiate a coordinated approach to ongoing training on the alignment of goals, rationale, results and data for all members of the education community