

District Review Report

School District No. 20 (Kootenay-Columbia)

Date: May 16-18, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

District Review Team Chair
Brian Fox Superintendent, School District No. 62 (Sooke)

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District Name:	Kootenay-Columbia
District Number:	20
Superintendent:	Larry Gray
Date of Visit:	May 16-18, 2005
Team Chair:	Brian Fox, Superintendent, SD 62 (Sooke)
Team Members:	Barbara Burkett, Parent, SD 37 (Delta) Dean Coder, Teacher, SD 57 (Prince George) Reg Fogarty, Principal, SD 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) Monica Pamer, Lead Director, Ministry of Education Candace Spilsbury, Director, SD 79 (Cowichan Valley) Ross Spina, Director, SD 73 (Kamloops/Thompson)

Context

School District No. 20, Kootenay-Columbia, is located in the Columbia Valley. This area has a population of approximately 32,500 people. The main centers are Trail, Rossland and Castlegar.

The Kootenay-Columbia School District has a current enrolment of 4,652 in Kindergarten to Grade 12, which also includes adult students. The School District's enrolment has been declining over the past 10 years and is expected to continue decreasing by approximately 200 students per year.

The student population is reflective of the area population. Approximately 4.9% of homes are non-English speaking and 4.3% are Aboriginal. There are 319 Aboriginal students and 185 students with Special Needs. There are 218 students enrolled in alternative education programs, which include the On-Line Learning Centre, the Kootenay-Columbia Learning Centre and Co-operative Education.

As a result of declining enrolment the School District has gone through a period of reconfiguration and realignment which has resulted in the closing of 10 schools. The District now has a total of 11 schools which consist of: two grade 8-12 schools, one grade 6-12 school, one K-2 school, one K-5 school and six K-7 schools.

While Kootenay-Columbia is a district that has faced financial and amalgamation challenges, provincial assessment achievement results have remained consistently strong.

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Summary of Process

The major purpose of the District Review is to provide discussion 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.

On the first morning, the Team met with Superintendent Dr. Larry Gray, senior staff, the Chairperson of the Board and three trustees. Dr. Gray led a presentation that provided an overview of the district context and the school district's criteria for school site plans. The Team also reviewed the District's Accountability Contract, Ministry data related to the contract and the school site plans.

Members of the Team then met with each of the schools, as well as other educational sites. The focus of the conversations was the Ten Points of Inquiry. Schools and sites visited included: Castlegar Primary, Fruitvale Elementary, Glenmerry Elementary, J.L. Crowe Secondary, Kinnaird Elementary, MacLean Elementary, Robson Community School, Rossland Secondary, Stanley Humphries Secondary, Twin Rivers Elementary, Webster Elementary, as well as, the On-Line Learning Centre, the Kootenay-Columbia Learning Centre and Co-op Education. Additional meetings were held with Aboriginal Education staff and the Kootenay-Columbia District Parent Advisory Committee (DPAC). At each of the schools, team members met with administrators and representatives of the School Planning Councils (SPCs). At other educational sites, team members met with program teachers and support staff.

Following the visits, the Team met with the Superintendent and senior staff, trustees and school administrators to present a draft of the District Review report.

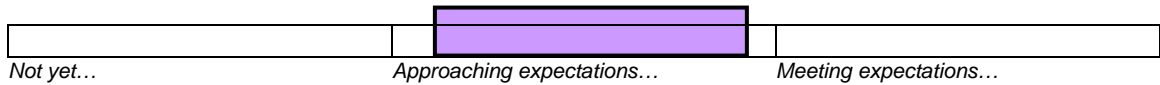
The Team wishes to thank everyone involved for their hospitality and willing engagement in the dialogue on student achievement during the review process.

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Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*

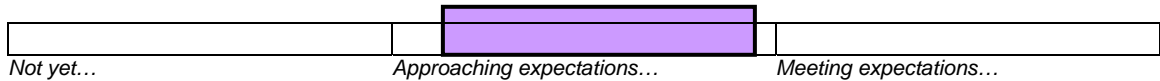
Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



- Most school goals are linked to the District Accountability Contract.
- Some schools need to develop goals with an instructional focus.
- Some schools need to have goals and objectives to address achievement for all students.

2. *Rationale:*

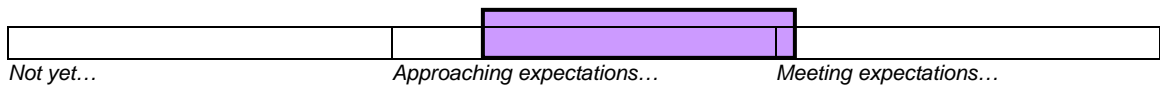
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The District and some schools have an evidenced based rationale for the selection of student achievement goals.
- A number of schools need to continue working at linking data to the development of school goals.

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.

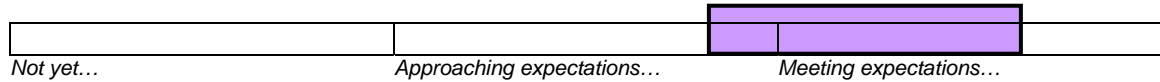


- The District and most schools can provide evidence of data collection.
- Some schools are using fewer than three sources of data.
- Some schools are using, analyzing and monitoring data to inform instruction.

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4. *Strategies:*

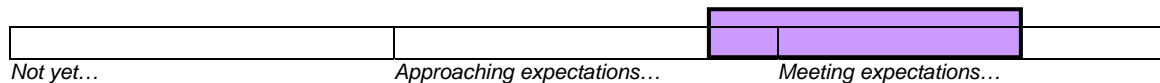
Improving districts and schools have focused, well organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



- The District has implemented numerous strategies to support schools in improving student learning.
- Most schools have comprehensive, innovative and research-based strategies to meet the goals.
- Most schools link strategies with staff development.

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 have aligned structures in support of student achievement.
- Some schools are innovative and creative in their development of structures.
- The District continues to develop structures to support and improve student learning.

6. *Results:*

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



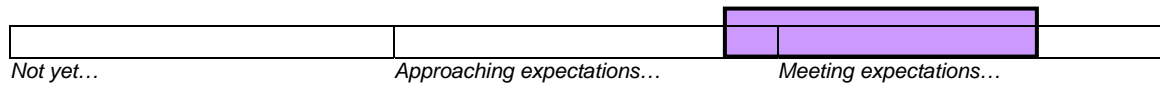
- The District's provincial assessment results are above provincial averages.
- The District is working with schools to monitor results.
- Many schools are using and tracking results with a variety of performance measures.
- Some schools are monitoring results and making adjustments to support struggling students.

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7. *Communication:*

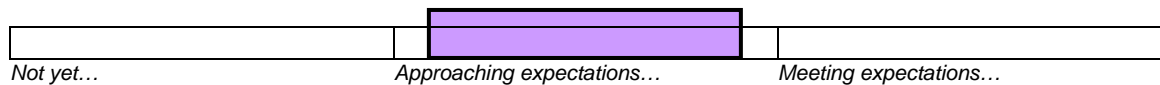
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



- The District and many schools make a strong effort to communicate effectively with all groups.
- Some schools have innovative ways of communicating with their communities.
- The District has encouraged discussion on student achievement with Parent Advisory Councils and DPAC.

8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*

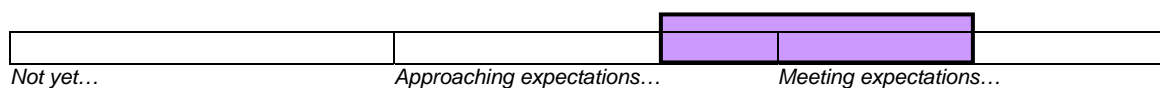
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued.



- The District is in the early stages of developing the connections between the District Accountability Contract and school site plans.
- The District has developed clear criteria and a template for site plans.
- Most schools have an appreciation for the support provided by district staff.

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.



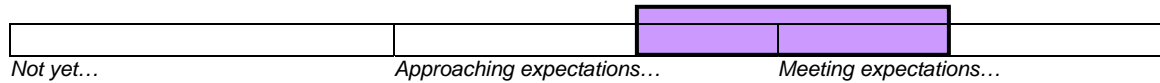
- The District recognizes and supports PACs, SPCs, DPAC and broad-based parent involvement.
- In most schools, SPCs are involved in ongoing conversations about student achievement.

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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 District has a plan for developing leadership capacity.
- In many schools teachers are taking leadership roles in the improvement of student achievement.
- Despite a history of challenging circumstances, the District continues to focus on student achievement.

Strengths

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

- High graduation rates
- Developing parental involvement
- Strong achievement on provincial assessments in reading, writing and numeracy and provincial exams
- Changing practices in classroom-based assessment
- Linkage between staff development and school goals
- Ongoing District support for school strategies and classroom strategies
- Use of BC Performance Standards in schools and inside classrooms
- School involvement in the Network of Performance Based Schools
- Strong community culture that supports student achievement
- Action research grants
- Accessing outside resources such as UBC School Recognition Awards
- High Aboriginal student graduation rates
- Alternative pathways for at-risk students
- Family literacy initiatives
- Early literacy intervention program
- District-wide primary District Reading Assessment (DRA)
- District-wide write in Grade 3 and 5
- District assessment plan (K – 12)

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Promising Practices

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

- District-wide volunteer One-to-One reading program
- School strategies to provide parent learning opportunities
- Family literacy day
- Library trivia day
- Researching gender based differences in student achievement
- Development of classroom-based numeracy assessment for Grades 2-6
- Kootenay Regional Coordination for school support
- Trades Transition Program with Selkirk College

Recommendations

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

- Training on the Accountability Contract framework including:
 - using the district template for site plan development
 - linking data to goal development
 - building skills in the analysis of data
 - monitoring and adjusting plans to meet the needs of all students
 - developing understanding of assessment for, of and as learning
 - developing understanding of the difference between strategies and structures
- Revisiting the District process for reviewing school plans to ensure consistency and clarity of expectations.
- Providing opportunities for sharing among schools i.e., School Planning Councils.
- Continuing opportunities for leadership development, including students.

Priorities (Optional)

Team identification of areas needing immediate attention.

The Review Team recognizes that the School District is in the early stages of linking school goals with District goals focused on student achievement. While all schools have a focus on student achievement, the School District needs to provide additional support to assist secondary schools to pursue and establish evidence-based goals for improving achievement of all students.