

**District Review Report 2007/08**  
**School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan)**  
November 18 - 23, 2007

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Submitted to the Ministry of Education



## District Review Report 2008 (emailed to team)

District: 23 (Central Okanagan)

Superintendent: Mike Roberts, Superintendent

Date of Visit: November 18 - 21, 2007

Team Chair: Dick Chambers, Retired Superintendent

Team Members: Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education  
Stacy DeCosse, Teacher, SD 6 (Rocky Mountain)  
Pat Duncan, Principal, SD 79 (Cowichan Valley)  
Kathleen King-Hunt, District Principal, First Nations Program &  
Educational Initiatives, SD 85 (Vancouver Island North)  
Grant Lenarduzzi, Assistant Superintendent, SD 35 (Langley)  
Laurey Roodenburg, Parent, SD 28 (Quesnel)  
Glenn Rowan, Coordinator, System Performance, Ministry of  
Education

### Context

The Central Okanagan School District serves 162,276 citizens living in four communities (Kelowna, Peachland, Lake Country and the Westside), near the midpoint of the Okanagan Valley. The District stretches for 60 km along the shores of Lake Okanagan.

The student population is 21,850, served by 41 schools. Although the regional adult population is growing, the number of new students entering the School District in Kindergarten has shown a slight decline over the past 10 years. There is significant movement of families to new developments at the edges of the immediate region which creates some challenges for the District.

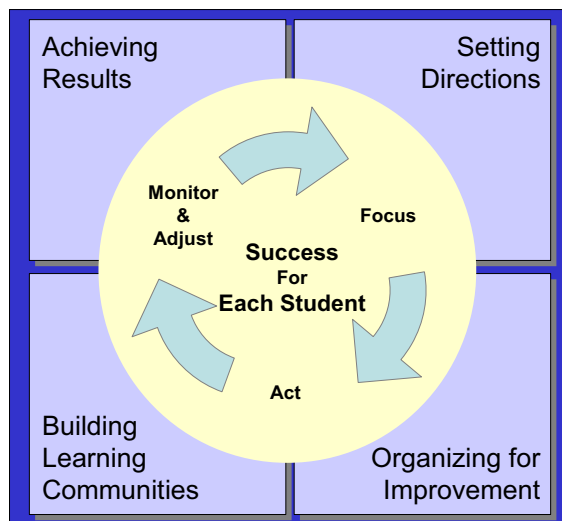
## The Purpose of District Review

Continuously improving school districts actively consider and respond to the following three questions in relation to their work to improve the success for each child:

1. What is most important? – Focus
2. What are we doing about it? – Act
3. How will we monitor and adjust our work to get improved results? – Monitor and Adjust

District Reviews are intended to explore these questions as they consider the work of the District in four key areas:

- Setting Directions
- Organizing For Improvement
- Building Learning Communities
- Achieving Results



The District Review report is not a report card to be seen as an end product. Rather, it is a document intended to assist the District in the work to improve success for each child. The report acknowledges District work and provides recommendations in the areas of Setting Directions, Organizing for Improvement, Building Learning Communities and Achieving Results.

**Process**

The District Review Team:

1. Met with district senior staff on November 18, 19 and 20, 2007. Present for the meetings were:

Mike Roberts, Superintendent  
Hugh Gloster, Assistant Superintendent  
Terry-Lee Beaudry, Norm Bradley & Clara Sulz, Directors of Instruction K-12  
Rod Odlum, Director of Instruction - Human Resources  
Peter Molloy, Director of Student Support Services  
Larry Paul, Secretary-Treasurer  
Jon Rever, Director of Technology & Education Services  
Eileen Sadlowski, Director of Finance  
Alan Cumbers, Director of Operations

2. Met with representatives of groups including:

The Board of Education, Central Okanagan Teachers' Association, Principals and Vice-Principals, Central Okanagan Parent Advisory Council (COPAC), including the Advisory Council of Exceptional Students, Aboriginal Parent and Family Education Council, and Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee

3. Met with school staff, students and parents at the following schools:

**Elementary schools**

A S Matheson Elementary  
Anne McClymont Elementary  
Chief Tomat Elementary  
Davidson Road Elementary  
Glenrosa Elementary  
Pearson Road Elementary  
Peter Greer Elementary  
Rutland Elementary  
Watson Road Elementary

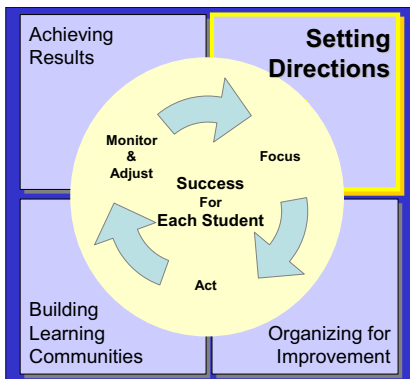
**Middle Schools**

Constable Neil Bruce Middle School  
KLO Middle School  
Rutland Middle School

**Secondary Schools**

Kelowna Secondary  
Mount Boucherie Senior Secondary  
Okanagan Mission Secondary  
Central Schools Programs

## Setting Directions:



### Expectations:

Continuously improving districts set directions that will enhance success for each child. Priorities are identified through the examination of evidence from a variety of sources at classroom, school, and district levels. The focus of district priorities is evident in district goals and objectives, and the related rationale.

## Observations

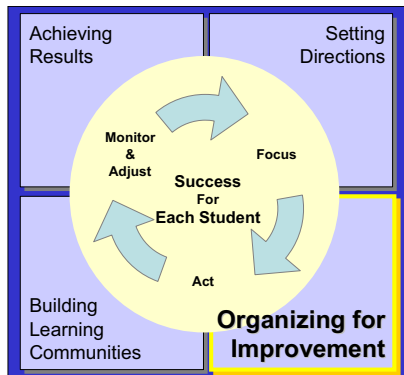
- The District is committed to and focused on improving success for each student.
- The District has used the recommendations from the last review to frame their efforts to improve success for each student, specifically:
  - There is a focus for continuous improvement throughout the District.
  - All partner groups support the work of the District.
- The child-centered goals and philosophies outlined in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement provide a framework for progress in the District.
- The District is attempting to review the effectiveness of its programs, build alignment in the system, and chart a course for the future:
  - The Strategic Plan clearly outlines the process to be used for review of District programs and initiatives.
- The District is focused on assessment to drive decision-making:
  - The District has made a major investment in promoting assessment for learning initiatives.
  - Diagnostic or standardized assessments are used throughout the District.
  - Schools are in transition from a diagnostic model of assessment to performance-based assessment for learning.
- The organization and development of the Achievement Contract is under review:
  - District goals inform school goals but do not drive them.
  - Planning documents do not completely reflect the depth of positive work in the District.
- District leadership is highly organized, supportive and effective in setting direction

## Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Sharpen the vision of what being a quality school district means to the Central Okanagan School District.
- Define what quality assessment means in the District:
  - Move forward with assessment for learning.
  - Emphasize school-generated data, and minimize the use of standardized and diagnostic assessments.
  - Embed assessment for learning practices within the classroom to inform instructional strategies.
- Simplify and clarify the Achievement Contract:
  - Include success for exceptional students in the Achievement Contract.
- Embed the goals of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (EA) in the layout of school plans and the Achievement Contract:
  - Although the awareness of the EA has improved in the District, alignment between the District and school plans with respect to the EA should be addressed.
  - Expect that all staff champion success for Aboriginal students.
- Build school plans that:
  - Are focused on success for each student.
  - Are based on school-level evidence over time.
  - Ensure that actions lead to the accomplishment of the goals.

## Organizing for Improvement:



### Expectations:

Continuously improving districts organize their efforts and activities to ensure success for each child. Work at all levels in the district is coherent and aligned to focus on improvement. School uniqueness and district directions are both supported. Strategies and structures selected to achieve the goals are a blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking. This includes effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The district supports connections among staff and schools to build capacity.

## Observations

The District has conscientiously and strategically organized itself to improve student success.

- The District engaged in an internal review last year.
- The District has structured senior management to support District goals.
- The District has organized its schools into families to enhance vertical alignment and communication.
- The District has set ambitious goals and created structures and strategies to meet them.
- The coordinator structure supports goal and priority areas.
- The Hollywood Education Centre provides significant professional development opportunities focused on improvement of classroom practice and assessment for learning.
- There are Literacy and Numeracy leaders at each school.
- The District provides a multitude of opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development directly related to District initiatives.
- The Aboriginal Education Committee makes financial and strategic decisions about the education of Aboriginal students:
  - The Medicine Wheel philosophy used by the committee will enhance education for all students.
- The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement has set a clear direction for the future, including philosophies, goals, and strategies for Aboriginal students.

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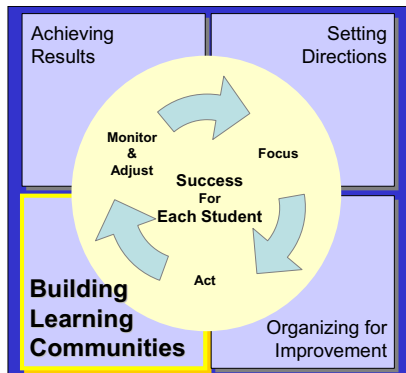
- Supports for Aboriginal students include Aboriginal advocates, secondary tutors, Aboriginal Certified Educational Assistants.
- Classes that teach the Okanagan Language have been established.

### Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Examine the interaction of the 3-year-rule, alternative programs, and Central Schools Programs as to their effect and efficacy on the success of senior students.
- Manage strategically the wide variety of initiatives in place to ensure effectiveness. For example, connect coordinators on an ongoing basis to integrate directions and activities.
- Review grade configurations and their impact on student success.
- Review the extent of the implementation of the middle school philosophy, its core characteristics and practices.
- Consider ways for the District to facilitate and enhance collaboration time for school teams.
- Clarify the District's vision for the role of Central Schools Programs.
- Establish the District's expectations regarding how schools and eSchool will work together to meet the needs of students.

## Building Learning Communities:



### Expectations:

Continuously improving districts have a vision for, and a shared commitment to success for each student. Leadership at all levels in all roles focuses on student success. Relationships are developed and maintained to support students and ongoing parent involvement is embedded in district culture. The district makes their plans and progress public. Communication occurs in multiple ways about their efforts and activities, and input is actively sought and valued.

## Observations

- A collaborative environment exists within the District (examples, District leadership teams, Board/senior staff planning and committee work).
- Strong, positive relationships are in place within the district:
  - The relationships between all stakeholder groups are positive and supportive.
  - Positive relationships between the senior District staff and teachers, and between senior staff and the Board, are mutually beneficial forces.
- Teachers commented on administrative support. They report that they feel a part of the District, and that their voice is heard and supported.
- There is active parent involvement at the school level. There are also advisory councils specifically for parents of Aboriginal students and parents of children with special needs.
- Positive directions in support for Aboriginal education initiatives are evident (school level support, hiring exemptions).
- Both senior management and Board of Education members are open to hearing and considering diverse points of view when making decisions and setting priorities.

## Recommendations

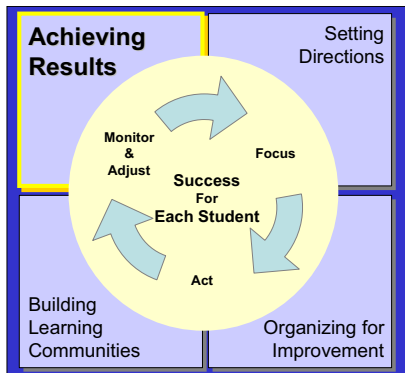
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Improve communication with parents by:
  - Developing a strategy to ensure that webpage information for parents is kept current.
  - Working with COPAC to create a webpage link for information of interest to members of the Advisory Council for Exceptional Students (ACES).
  - Providing information/newsletters to parents and others in more than one way to ensure that messages are being received.

## **District Review Report 2008 (emailed to team)**

- Provide district support for the recently formed Aboriginal Parent and Family Education Council in order for it to become an effective voice for Aboriginal students in the district, which is the first of its kind in the province.

## Achieving Results:



### Expectations:

Improving districts continuously improve results. They monitor progress and make adjustments in key areas of their work to improve achievement – for individual students, groups of students, schools and the district.

## Observations

- Many areas of academic achievement show strong results:
  - Aboriginal results have significantly improved over the last several years and continue to be a focus at district and school levels.
  - The overall graduation rate has increased this year, and the District is examining ways to sustain these results.
- The District has a focus on continuous improvement at all levels:
  - The District is increasing its use of disaggregated data, as well as tracking cohorts and individual students.
- Individualized intervention strategies focused on at-risk students are at the beginning stages.
  - Intervention strategies at the elementary and secondary level show positive results
- The District has developed rich resources and assessments to support healthy schools.
- The District has developed and is recognized for an extensive offering of successful career programs.

## Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Continue the purposeful examination of achievement trends and the implementation of strategies to address identified issues.
- Examine reasons for improvement, or the lack of improvement, in all areas including the six-year Aboriginal grad rates.
- Address the decrease in student achievement between Grades 4-7.
- Review opportunities and programs for high achievers, gifted, and exceptional learners.

## Conclusion

The District Review Team was very impressed with the work in the Central Okanagan School District to improve success for all students, and believes that several of its initiatives are exemplary, including:

- an alignment between district priorities and actions for students in classrooms;
- the critical analysis of results and examination of the effect of actions taken;
- a commitment to continuous improvement at the school level, exemplified by an initiative that has significantly increased course completion rates;
- the holistic philosophy of the Medicine Wheel embedded in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement;
- the breadth and depth of career opportunities available to students.

Additionally, the Team believes that the District is poised to make further, substantial, strides in student achievement as it challenges itself to deepen the focus on success for each child.

## Response to the Review

The District will respond annually to the Recommendations in the report within its Accountability/Achievement Contracts. For further information regarding the District response to this report, please contact School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan).

The Ministry of Education, through the Superintendent of Achievement and the Governance and Accountability Division, will monitor the District's progress in addressing the Recommendations in this report. This may include discussions/interactions with the District about the Accountability/Achievement Contract, the completion of or ongoing efforts relating to the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, training and support for school level staff and School Planning Councils, and/or other ongoing dialogue with the School District and its community.