

District Review Report
School District No. 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)

May 13 - 16, 2007

Submitted to the Ministry of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Dr. Ron Rubadeau, Retired Superintendent



District: 27 (Williams Lake)

Superintendent: Wayne Leckie

Date of Visit: May 14-16, 2007

Team Chair: Dr. Ron Rubadeau, Retired Superintendent

Team Members: Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education
Ted Cadwallader, District Principal of Aboriginal Education, SD 79
(Cowichan Valley)
Charles Coleman, Principal, SD 79 (Cowichan Valley)
Christine Dickinson, Assistant Superintendent, SD 54
(Bulkley Valley)
Timothy Dunford, Parent, SD 63 (Saanich)

Context

The Cariboo-Chilcotin School District is located in the Central Interior of British Columbia comprising two primary urban centers (Williams Lake and 100 Mile House) and a number of smaller communities. The District has a student population of 5,954, nearly 24 percent of whom are of First Nations ancestry, and employs 754 teachers and support personnel. Students attend 1 of 30 schools in the district ranging from elementary, secondary, store front alternate, to rural elementary-secondary. Like many districts in BC, Cariboo-Chilcotin faces declining enrolment issues. Additionally, partially because of this decline, the District has had to deal with some atypical fiscal challenges.

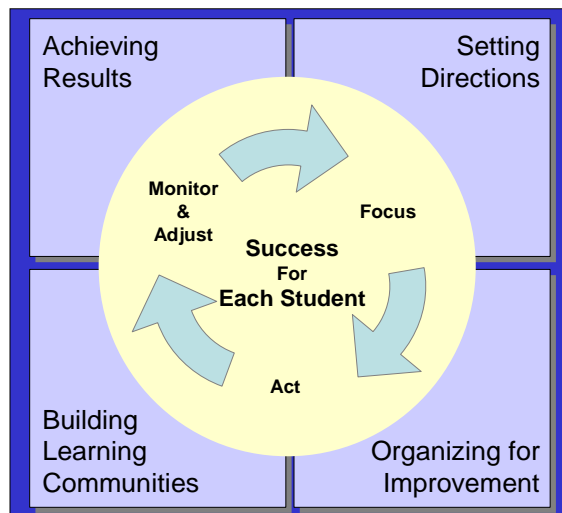
The Purpose of District Reviews

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:

- What is most important? – Focus
- What are we doing about it? – Act
- 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 report intended to assist the district with 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. The review report concludes with a Summary of Recommendations for the staff in the district as they move forward in their efforts to improve achievement for every student.

The district's response to the review is monitored by the Ministry through subsequent Achievement Contracts and ongoing interaction with the district.

Process

The District Review Team:

1. Met with district senior staff on May 13, 2007.

2. Met with representative groups including:

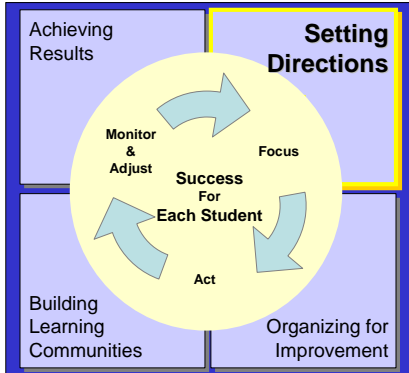
- Board of Trustees
- Cariboo-Chilcotin Teachers' Association
- District Parent Advisory Council
- First Nations Advisory Council
- Principals and Vice-Principals
- Union of Operating Engineers

3. Visited the following schools and met with school staff, students and parents:

- Alexis Creek Elementary School
- Anahim Lake Elementary Jr-Secondary School
- Chilcotin Road Elementary School
- Horse Lake Elementary School
- Marie Sharpe Elementary School
- Mile 108 Elementary School

- Columneetza Secondary School
- Peter Skene Ogden Jr-Secondary School
- Williams Lake Secondary School

Setting Directions



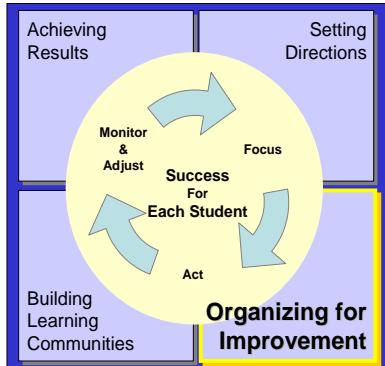
Expectations:

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 is evident in district goals and objectives, and the related rationale.

Observations

- While goals have been set at the school and district level, these priorities have not been established based on either current hard data or effective evidence.
- Most school plans have not been substantively revised in three years.
- It was difficult for schools to identify performance measures that would indicate their published objectives have been met or should even be revised.
- Goal focus was generally unclear and milestones for the achievement of significant work were not apparent.
- Planning documents were available but were not used by the schools as monitoring or adjustment tools.
- There is an internal perception that the district is resource poor.
- The Team found that resources available were not evaluated for effectiveness or put to best use to support improved achievement.
- Frequently, school goals and objectives were not focused on student learning.

Organizing for Improvement



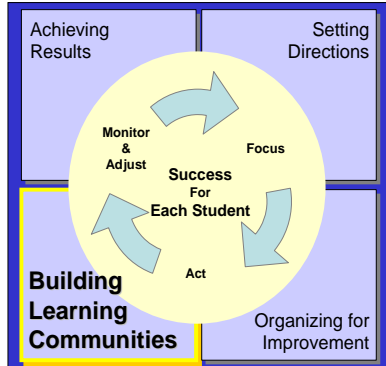
Expectations:

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

- There is disconnection between the planning and actions of the District and the operations of the schools.
- There is little evidence that the senior management works cooperatively with schools on an ongoing basis to improve success for each student.
- The Team met hard-working and caring educators who did not feel supported by the District
- Schools display a competitive attitude to one another in relation to the District regarding resources, personnel, and facilities improvements to support their students.
- Schools appear unaware of best practices in many areas.
- Assessment for learning is not used or well understood in schools.
- Strategic planning is either not apparent or not communicated to constituents.
- Schools are unable to articulate the rationale regarding why resources are disbursed or why management decisions are made.

Building Learning Communities



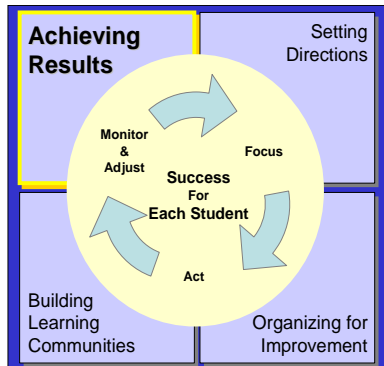
Expectations:

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

- Vision and direction are poorly articulated and there is generally no district-wide commitment to success of each student.
- Relationships are deteriorating and trust is not apparent between schools, between schools and the District, or between the District and its partners.
- While school and district plans have been made public this action has not led to increased confidence by anyone in the ability of management to govern the system.
- Learning communities are sporadic and appear to be declining over time. Partners do not work together to build capacity for student learning.
- School Planning Councils and the District Parent Advisory Council do not appear functional or valued in the process to improve success for each student.
- A good process was used to develop the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, and there are plans to increase staff to support implementation. However, concerns were expressed by a number of partner groups that the decisive actions needed to address issues including racism at each school may not take place.
- A great deal of work is required to build the relationships that lead to an appreciation of the diversity of the students and their parents in the district.
- The District has not offered leadership in the development of opportunities for educators to engage in learning conversations, either formally or informally.

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

- Results are not consistently improving.
- There is little evidence to suggest that any planned programs will lead to improved student achievement.
- There is little evidence that monitoring and adjusting is occurring. Adjustments in key areas have not been made in the last three years.
- Student performance, where it is improving, is independent of district goal setting or the subsequent organization of the District to achieve these results.
- First Nations student achievement data has been consistently poor for more than a decade.

General Observations

Over the course of the three-day District Review visit, the Team had an opportunity to meet with trustees, district staff, principals, teachers, parents, students, and partner groups such as the First Nations Educational Advisory Committee and the District Parent Advisory Council. During these meetings, attendees consistently expressed concerns about the District's structures, communications, budget and resource allocation procedures, as well as issues related to a lack of clear direction, student success, especially for Aboriginal learners, and leadership. Many individuals expressed hope that decisive action would be taken subsequent to the External Review to correct these longstanding concerns.

Indeed, these issues and the remedies have been previously discussed by both internal and external reviews. The latest effort was the Internal District Review of April 2006 which recommended immediate action in four specific high needs areas. For a variety of reasons, the District has been slow to implement these recommendations. With no sense of urgency to complete important work, the District appears to be stalled in the process of planning to plan.

Two critical requirements are needed for any district to achieve the desired results for students; the capacity to plan reforms, and the will to enact them. It was apparent to the Review Team from the various meetings held, a review of the District's planning documents, and an examination of the District's performance data, that neither the consistent commitment to improve achievement for each student nor the skills, in sufficient quantity to ensure the District's future success, were present.

Given the lack of sustainable improvement in many critical areas, it is essential that the District seek support to focus and implement initiatives to increase achievement levels for all students.

Conclusion

It is the recommendation of the Review Team that schools, district staff, trustees and the Ministry of Education take immediate decisive action to improve success for all students in School District No. 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin).