

District Review Report
School District No. 28 (Quesnel)

April 27 – 30, 2008

Submitted to the Ministry of Education



District Review Report 2008

District: 28 (Quesnel)

Superintendent: Sue-Ellen Miller, Superintendent

Date of Visit: April 27 - 30, 2008

Team Chair: Dick Chambers, Retired Superintendent

Team Members: John Brisebois, Principal, SD 8 (Kootenay Lake)
Marilyn Bryant, Teacher, SD 52 (Prince Rupert)
Fiona Delcourt, Parent, SD 78 (Fraser-Cascade)
Dean Goodman, System Performance Branch,
Ministry of Education
Andy Krawczyk, Principal, SD 39 (Vancouver)
Renee Wentland, System Performance Branch,
Ministry of Education

Context

School District No. 28 (Quesnel) serves approximately 30,000 people in the Central Interior of British Columbia. The District enrolls approximately 3,900 FTE students in 18 schools, the majority of which are located in Quesnel. The District also encompasses the communities of Kluskus, Narcosli, Nazko and Wells.

The community is situated on the traditional lands of the Carrier and Chilcotin Nations. Approximately one-quarter of the student population is Aboriginal. Including the 4 resident First Nation Bands, the District serves students of 52 Bands representing more than 20 First Nations and each of the 11 major Aboriginal language families. A majority Métis population further enriches this diversity.

The District faces a number of challenges, including serving an increasingly vulnerable student population and declining enrolment. To help address these challenges, the District is currently exploring ways to restructure its schools.

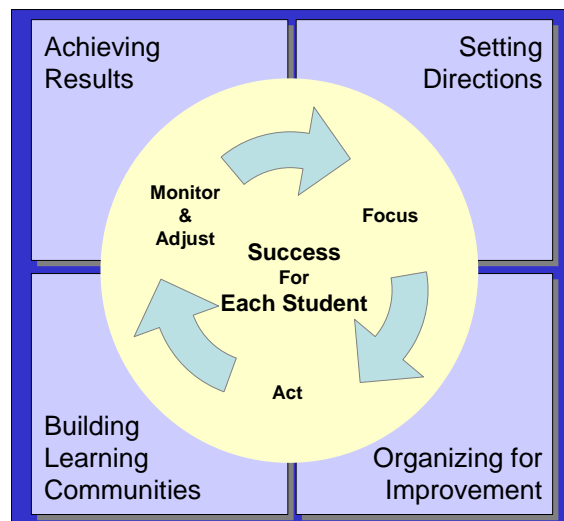
The Purpose of District Review

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 April 27 and 28. Present for the meetings were:

Sue-Ellen Miller, Superintendent
Cynthia Bernier, Director of Instruction – Curriculum
Randy Curr, Director of Instruction – Human Resources
Tim Klotz, Secretary-Treasurer
Sue MacDonald, District Principal Support Services
Holly Toews, District Principal Aboriginal Education
Vicki Esplen, Literacy Resource Teacher
Lizanne Eyford, Numeracy Resource Teacher

2. Met with representatives of groups including:

The Board of Education
Quesnel District Teachers' Association (QDTA)
Quesnel Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (QPVPA)
Aboriginal Education Council
District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) and PAC Presidents
Construction Maintenance and Allied Workers (CMAW Local 2545)

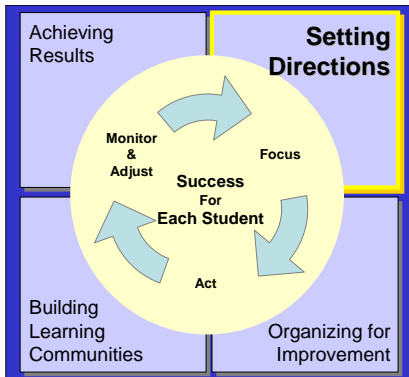
3. Met with school staff, students and parents at the following schools:

Bouchie Lake Elementary
Carson Elementary
Dragon Lake Elementary
École Baker Elementary
Kersley Elementary
Lakeview Elementary
Narcosli Elementary
Nazko Valley Elementary
Parkland Elementary
Red Bluff Lhtako Elementary
Riverview Elementary
Voyageur Elementary

Correlieu Secondary School
Quesnel Secondary School

McNaughton Centre Alternate Programs

Setting Directions:



Expectations:

Continuously improving districts set directions that enhance success for each child. District priorities are identified through thorough examination of evidence from classroom, school, and district level sources. The focus on continuous improvement is evident in goals, objectives and related rationale. Goals and objectives are systematically reviewed and revised.

Observations

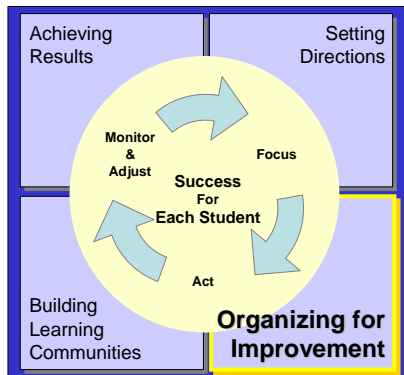
- Clear, established processes exist for discussing and addressing district and school issues.
- The District team is setting clear directions for enhancing student success.
- The District's achievement contract demonstrates a strong commitment to planning based on diverse sets of evidence.
 - School goals are not necessarily driven by an examination of available evidence.
- Aboriginal goals reflect the need to raise the success rate of Aboriginal students; however, a greater system-wide focus on these goals is warranted.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Prioritize goals to reflect current needs and narrow their focus on improved student achievement.
 - Ensure schools develop school plans that meet the needs of their students and accurately reflect school practice.
 - Consider how the Collaborative Leadership Advocating Student Success (CLASS) meetings process could be used in the development of district priorities.
- Make Aboriginal student success a more pervasive focus in the District.

Organizing for Improvement:



Expectations:

Continuously improving districts organize actions 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. Actions selected to achieve goals are a blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking. These actions also include effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The district connects staff and schools to build capacity. Actions are monitored and adjusted for effectiveness.

Observations

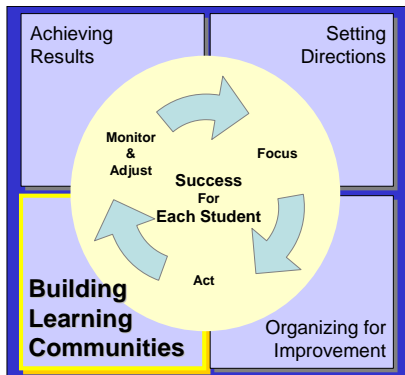
- District support is provided in both Literacy and Numeracy. Coordination between these two areas is evident and provides good guidance to schools. Schools expressed appreciation for this leadership and its responsiveness.
- The Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) has been in existence for 20 years and has the authority to allocate targeted funds. AEC is involved in hiring the Principal of Aboriginal Education as well as substitute First Nation Support Workers.
 - The District has applied for human rights exemptions for hiring to help increase the number of Aboriginal educators in the District.
 - The District has begun to discuss its second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.
- The District is facing challenges associated with an increasingly vulnerable student population and declining enrolment and resources. District responses to this fact include:
 - Allocating support to schools based on needs using the Resourcing for Equity process.
 - School-based teams are used in each school to identify vulnerable students and to address their particular needs.
 - Student Support Services are well developed, favorably resourced, responsive, and are effective in meeting the needs of many students.
 - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach complements the inclusive vision of the District and has the potential to meet the needs of many students.
- There is a developing interest in 'assessment for learning' methodology as a way of influencing instructional practice and improving student achievement.
- A teacher-to-teacher mentorship program is in place. The program is co-sponsored by the District and the Quesnel District Teachers' Association.
- It is unclear how the effectiveness of strategies and structures are monitored.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Recruit additional qualified Aboriginal teachers through the employment equity program.
- Provide greater support to staff members to develop skills to respond to an increasingly vulnerable student population.
- Deepen the understanding of the different types and purposes of assessment (assessment as, for, and of learning) and when they can be best used to maximize student learning.
 - Where possible, align district assessment needs with school practices.
- Monitor the effectiveness of initiatives in improving student success and revise or refine initiatives that do not lead to improvement.

Building Learning Communities:



Expectations:

In continuously improving districts there is a shared vision for and a 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. Ongoing parent involvement is embedded in district culture. The district makes public their plans and progress. They collaborate and communicate in multiple ways about their work. Input and dialogue is actively sought and valued district-wide.

Observations

- A strong sense of collaboration and collegiality exists across the District, as evidenced by the widespread use of school-based teams, CLASS meetings, and open board committee meetings.
- Leadership opportunities for students are evident in the District.
- Parents are engaged in schools. Parents, schools, and the District recognize the need to increase parent involvement.
- Structures are in place that have promoted positive relationships with the Aboriginal communities (e.g., AEC, Aboriginal representation on the Board of Education, Aboriginal support workers); however, the District and its Aboriginal education partners recognize that more work needs to be done.

Recommendations

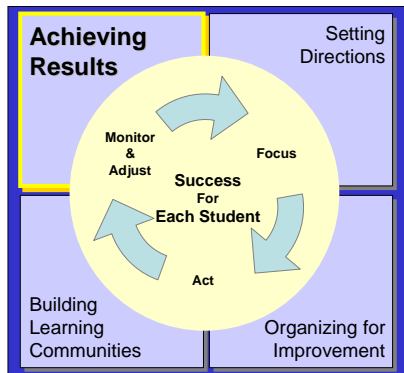
Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Support increased parent involvement and engagement in schools and district activities.
 - Actively seek out parent input on school plans.
 - Provide training for parents involved in school planning.
 - Involve schools and partner groups in the development of district planning documents.

District Review Report 2008

- Increase understanding of Aboriginal culture throughout the District and school communities (all school and district staff, students, and educational partners).
 - In the process of developing the second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, build on the positive relationships already in place between the District and the Aboriginal communities.
 - Engage the Aboriginal communities in school and district activities.
 - Encourage the AEC to visit individual schools to discuss and observe Aboriginal initiatives.

Achieving Results:



Expectations:

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

Observations

- “What is best for students” is a fundamental driver of district and board of education decision making.
 - School-based teams are focused on the success of individual students.
 - The District is beginning to look at the achievement of each child.
- The District recognizes the need to improve student achievement in a number of key areas. District results in Reading, Writing and Numeracy require continued attention.
- Although a continued concern at 54 percent, Aboriginal six-year school completion rates are improving.
- The Alternate Program is continuing to build a sense of belonging and commitment among its students. With a clear focus on the three A’s (Attendance, Attitude, and Achievement) student success is increasing.
- The StrongStart Program has had an immediate and positive impact on both children and parents.
 - The District is increasing its involvement in early learning initiatives.
 - A second Early Learning Centre is being modeled after the StrongStart Program.
- Carrier Language instruction is creating Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who are functional in the language.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Improve student achievement levels, particularly with Aboriginal students.
- Determine what success for Aboriginal students looks like at both the district and school levels.
 - Expand the responsibility for Aboriginal success across all the members of the school community.
 - Persist with efforts to increase the successful transition of Aboriginal students from Grade 7 to Grade 8.
- Track cohort success over time.
 - Continue the development of tracking methodology.
 - Make progress of individual students easily available to teachers.
 - Use 'assessment for learning' to inform and adjust instructional strategies to get the desired results.

Conclusion

The District and schools demonstrate a strong commitment to student success. The District recognizes that continued efforts are required to increase student achievement. There is an evolving climate that encourages innovative, needs-based initiatives aimed at maximizing the potential of success for each student. Furthermore, there is a commitment among the District and the Aboriginal communities to focus their efforts towards a new Aboriginal “partnership agreement”.

The District is facing challenges associated with an increasingly vulnerable student population as well as declining enrolment and resources. There is a long established tradition dedicated to collaboration across all partner groups, emphasized by the District’s motto – “Together We Can”. The Review Team is confident that the District has the commitment and capacity to address the recommendations of this report in order to improve student achievement.

Response to the Review

The District will respond annually to the Recommendations in the report within its Achievement Contracts. For further information regarding the District response to this report, please contact School District No. 28 (Quesnel).

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 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.