

District Review Report
School District No. 35 (Langley)

April 20 – 23, 2008

Submitted to the Ministry of Education



District Review Report 2008

District: 35 (Langley)

Superintendent: Cheryle Beaumont, Superintendent

Date of Visit: April 20 - 23, 2008

Team Chair: Dr. Keven Elder, Superintendent, SD No. 63 (Saanich)

Team Members: Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Min of Education
Deidre Bjornson, Coordinator - District Literacy Support, SD No. 69
(Qualicum)
Margaret Mary Deck, District Coordinator - Aboriginal Education,
SD No. 43 (Coquitlam)
Randy Horne, Principal, SD No. 23 (Central Okanagan)
Colleen Krasman, Parent, SD No. 72 (Campbell River)
Lorna Newman, Director, SD No. (Cowichan Valley)
Glenn Rowan, Coordinator, System Performance, Min of Education
John Simpson, Superintendent, SD No. 42
(Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)

Context

School District No. 35 (Langley) comprises 18,465 students (school-aged and adult learners) for the 2007/08 year. This enrolment represents a small increase over the previous year. The District offers services for Langley City and Township. Those areas are experiencing rapid suburban growth and declining population in rural areas. The District's First Nations population represents seven percent of the student base. These students have participated in and performed well on a range of indicators for a number of years, including FSA scores and Six-Year Completion Rates.

The District operates 43 sites organized in a number of distinctive ways including 27 elementary, 2 elementary/fundamental, 1 elementary Fine Arts, 7 secondary, 3 alternate, 1 fundamental middle/secondary, and 1 Grade 1-12 Fine Arts school. Additionally, the District has a distributed learning centre and a continuing education centre. The District operates two Provincial Resource Programs for deaf and hard of hearing students. Diversity and choice are key features in the District. This is supported by the fact that 39 percent of students attend school outside of their catchment area.

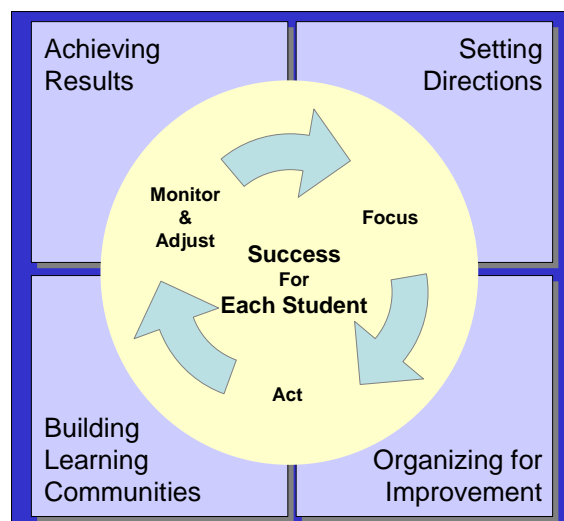
The Purpose of District Review

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 Sunday, April 20, 2008. Present for the meetings were:

Senior Management Staff:

Cheryle Beaumont, Superintendent
Jennifer Canas, Assistant Superintendent – HR
Charlie Etchell, Assistant Superintendent
Grant Lenadruzzi, Assistant Superintendent
Peter Greenwood, Secretary-Treasurer

District Staff:

Suz Hoffman, District Administrator – Instructional/Professional Services
Rose Janssen, District Administrator – Special Services

2. Met with the Board of Education on Sunday, April 20, 2008. Present for the meetings were:

Steve Burton: Chair
Alison McVeigh, Vice-Chair
Trustee Joan Bech
Trustee Stacey Cody
Trustee Hattie Hogeterp
Trustee Sonya Paterson
Trustee Rod Ross

3. Met with representatives of groups on April 21 and 22 including:

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|--|---|
| Senior Management Staff | CUPE 1260 |
| Board of Education | CUPE 1851 |
| Principals and Vice Principals Association | District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) |
| Katzie First Nation | Langley Teachers' Association |
| Kwantlen First Nation | Aboriginal Advisory Committee |
| Matsqui First Nation | |

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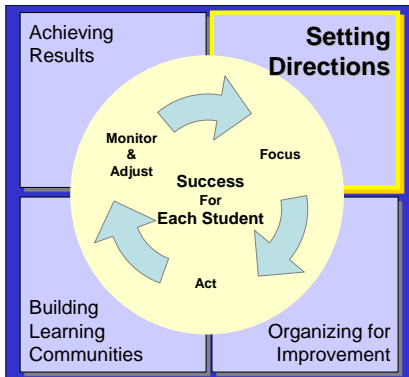
4. Met with school staff, students and parents on April 21 and 22 at the following schools:

Belmont Elementary
Fort Langley Elementary
Gordon Greenwood Elementary
Nicomekl Elementary
North Otter Elementary
Parkside Centennial Elementary
R.C. Garnett Demonstration Elementary
Tophan Elementary
Uplands Elementary

Brookwood Secondary
Langley Secondary
Walnut Grove Secondary

Langley Education Centre
Langley Fine Arts
Lochiel U-Connect Education Centre
Shortreed Community Elementary

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 Review Team observed senior management in the midst of leading and managing a significant change process involving creating a sense of urgency in relation to the work to continuously improve success for each student. It was clear to the Team that the district's senior administrators are committed to making changes and aligning resources in order to meet the needs of all learners.
 - The District's Principals and Vice Principals are working alongside senior managers in implementing and leading this change process.
- The Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement serves as a guide to planning for success for each Aboriginal student. The Aboriginal Advisory Committee provides strong leadership in this regard.
- School plans are, for the most part, aligned with district priorities. The district planning template provides a guide for conversations, within each school community, about success for each child.
- Achievement Contract goals and objectives are based, largely, on the analysis of Provincial, district, school and student level data.
- There is evidence of growing use throughout the district of individualized data to track student success, inform planning and support improved instructional practices. Specific examples include:
 - Growing awareness of the need for the use of cohort data.
 - Emerging use of DART as an assessment tool.
 - Use of District-Wide Writes in all schools and growing use of School-Wide Writes.

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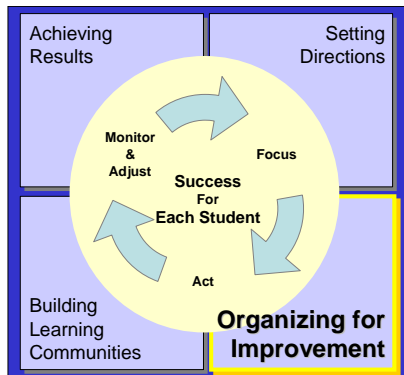
- The District is engaged in the process of refining planning documents to reflect its commitment to improving individual student success, with district and school goals increasingly focusing on student outcomes. Still, there are some schools where planning focuses on the provision of opportunities as the measure of success, rather than on indicators of student achievement in key learning areas.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Build collective commitment to continuous improvement throughout the system with a focus on success for each child.
- Focus planning on success for each learner, within inclusive learning environments, characterized by:
 - High quality assessment for learning.
 - Differentiated instruction.
 - Continuous monitoring and adjusting for improvement.
 - Support for all learners within the classroom.
- Expand the District's definition of a graduate (i.e. the Graduate Profile) to include a more diversified vision of success for each student.
- Adjust planning to meet individualized student needs by developing an understanding of students who leave the system, including the six-year non-completers.

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

- The District is rich in programs, instructional services and professional development opportunities.
- The District has a number of structures designed to support best practices including:
 - Literacy facilitators.
 - Restorative practices.
 - Early learning initiatives.
 - Aboriginal Advisory Committee.
 - Commitment to Action Plan (CTAP).
- Collaboration time for teachers is built into most schools, which allows for ongoing dialogue regarding school planning and professional practice.
- Special education service delivery varies across the district. It is properly evolving in some schools from a categorical model to one focused on addressing diverse individual student needs, within an inclusive learning environment.
- A common, coherent, district-wide application of differentiated instruction was not evident. Yet, there appeared to be interest and knowledge across the district.

Recommendations

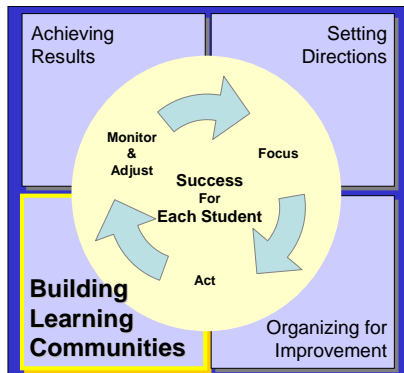
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Refocus efforts across the district from an emphasis on provision of programs, to a coordinated approach of individualized instructional delivery designed to meet the needs of each student.

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- Focus on students in Grades 4 to 9 in order to ensure student success, support transitions, and provide appropriate interventions.
- Examine the effectiveness and efficacy of the District's current structures and processes, including choice, decentralized decision-making and applications of technology, to ensure that all practices support optimal student learning.
- Enhance district-wide understanding of, and commitment to, high quality, authentic assessment practices which are grounded in the use of B.C. Performance Standards.
- Strengthen system-wide capacity for instructional leadership of administrators and teachers in the areas of assessment for learning and differentiated instruction.
- Use the technical expertise in the district to refine student achievement data collection in order to inform instruction.

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

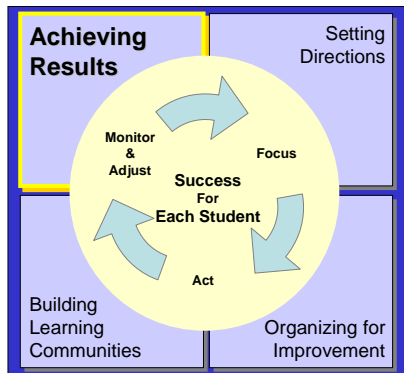
- The District and schools have talented leadership. During school visits, many teachers expressed appreciation for the support they receive from leaders at all levels.
- There was district-wide evidence of willingness to engage in collaboration and meaningful dialogue about the complexities and challenges involved in ensuring success for each student.
- Active parent involvement was evident in many schools. Through School Planning Councils and DPAC, parents are included in many planning and decision-making processes.
- The Aboriginal Advisory Committee is working effectively with the District and within the community to ensure each student's success. The Committee provides voice and leadership for First Nations students, families and communities. Examples include:
 - The dedication and effectiveness of the Aboriginal staff and cultural presenters.
 - Aboriginal teachings instill lifelong lessons for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners.
- While there is evidence of a strong collaborative culture in the district, some partner groups expressed feelings of non-involvement in district direction. Nevertheless, these groups are eager to engage in constructive dialogue regarding challenging issues.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Enable and enhance professional collaboration, communication, and sharing of best practices district-wide to support student learning:
 - Among principals and vice principals.
 - School to school.
 - Grade group to grade group.
 - Across curricular areas.
- Align efforts, at all levels, to reflect the District's mission statement. Involve all partner groups in the work of ensuring success for each child.
- Build clearly understood structures and processes, for dialogue and discussion with all partner groups to make decisions and plan for the future.

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

- Langley is a district with a long history of student successes with demonstrated improvements in areas including FSA (Numeracy) and provincial exams.
- While there was evidence that many members of the community were comfortable with current and historical results, others suggested that results should be better and expressed concerns about complacency.
- The Team observed the beginning of efforts at all levels to systematically monitor progress and adjust strategies to enhance student learning.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Improve the success of Aboriginal and alternate students.
- Improve successful transitions for students in Grades 4 through 9.
- Modify the Achievement Contract to act as a strategic guide to connect results, planning and execution of program delivery.
- Use a process of inquiry to monitor and adjust instructional and assessment practices in ways that can be linked to enhanced success for students.
- Work collaboratively to find ways to embed systematic assessment for learning in school and district culture.
- Satisfaction with successes needs to be balanced with a sense of urgency in the District's pursuit of increased achievement. Work with all partner groups to build a sense of "optimistic dissatisfaction" as a means to increase expectations for all learners.

Conclusion

The Review Team observed district-wide dedication to student success. There is a commitment to school-based, professional collaboration in Langley, with significant district support. The District is in the process of working with its community to reorganize and refocus efforts to ensure that the delivery of educational services is tailored to individual needs and improves results for all students.

The Review Team is confident that the District, with a heightened sense of urgency, has the commitment and capacity to implement changes in structures and practices to further enhance success for each student.

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. 35 (Langley).

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.