

District Review Report 2006/07

School District No. 36 (Surrey)

April 15 - 19, 2007

Submitted to the Ministry of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Dick Chambers, Retired Superintendent



District Review Report 2007

District:	36 (Surrey)
Superintendent:	Mike McKay
Date of Visit:	April 15 - 19, 2007
Team Chair:	Dick Chambers, Retired Superintendent
Team Members:	Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education Terry-Lee Beaudry, Director of Instruction, SD 23 (Central Okanagan) Fiona Delcourt, Parent, SD 78 (Fraser-Cascade) Verna Duckworth, District ESL Helping Teacher, SD 34 (Abbotsford) Michael Kee, Vice Principal, SD 44 (North Vancouver) Grant Lenarduzzi, Assistant Superintendent, SD 35 (Langley) Miles Smitten, Principal, SD 67 (Okanagan Skaha)

Context

Surrey School District is the largest in British Columbia, and one of the fastest growing education systems in Canada. The student population in Surrey and White Rock for 2006/07 is approximately 65,000 students. Students attend one of 99 elementary schools, 19 secondary schools or 5 learning centres, a distributed learning program and a variety of satellite and inter-agency programs serving a wide range of diverse student needs. This year's enrolment represents an increase of 800 students over the previous year. Approximately one in four students attending school in the district is from a household in which English is not the first language. Almost 13,000 students fall within the 5-year cap for the provision of ESL (English as a Second Language) service. The District demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusionary practices and presently supports 6,500 students with special needs (2,200 Low Incidence and 4,300 High Incidence). As of September 30, 2006, there were 2,600 Aboriginal students in the district.

The District offers a variety of programs of choice that provide unique learning experiences for students. Programs of choice in the district include Integrated Studies, Montessori, Traditional School, Intensive Fine Arts, Adlerian Philosophy, International Baccalaureate, French Immersion and Intensive Core French (Grades 5–7), Elementary Punjabi, 5 different languages at the secondary level, and a variety of programs offered in partnership with Kwantlen University College and the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

Other unique features of the District:

- 353 students were enrolled in Apprenticeship Programs during the 2005/06 school year.

District Review Report 2007

- Over 4,000 students were enrolled in Career Programs during the 2005/06 school year.
- Approximately 2,400 students completed full credit summer school in 2006.
- More than 2,600 students participated in a work experience placement during 2005/06.
- Over 850 international students are enrolled for the 2006/07 school year.

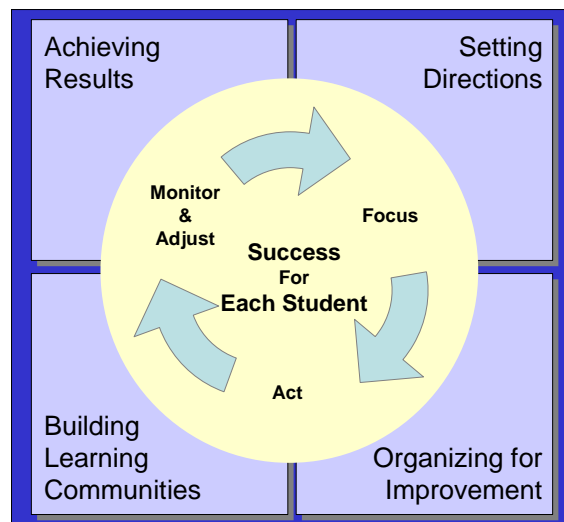
Purpose of District Reviews

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.

Process

The District Review team:

1. Met with district senior staff on Sunday, Monday and Thursday.

Present for the meetings were:

Mike McKay, Superintendent of Schools
Peter Drescher, Deputy Superintendent
Bob Coventry, Assistant Superintendent
Alan Jones, Assistant Superintendent
Sharon Cohen, Assistant Superintendent
Rick Fabbro, Assistant Superintendent
John Ormond, Assistant Superintendent
Rick Ryan, Director of Instruction, Student Support Services
Yrsa Jensen, Director of Instruction
Alasdair McKinnon, Director of Instruction
Pius Ryan, Director of Instruction
Dave Paul, Director of Instruction, Continuing Education
Gayle Bedard, District Principal, Aboriginal Education

2. Met with representative groups including:

Aboriginal Advisory Committee
Board of School Trustees
CUPE Executive
District Parent Advisory Council Executive
Exempt Staff Executive
Surrey Connect, Principal Glenn Galy
Surrey Principals & Vice Principals Executive
Surrey Teachers' Association Executive

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

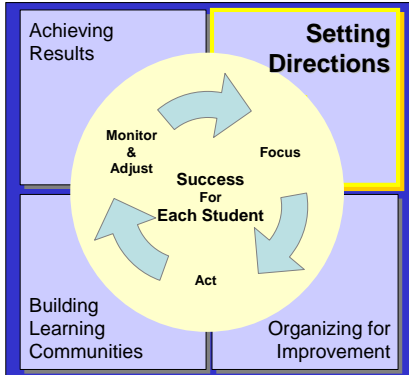
A H P Matthew Elementary
Beaver Creek Elementary
Betty Huff Elementary
Cedar Hills Elementary
Cloverdale Traditional
Dr F D Sinclair Elementary
Erma Stephenson Elementary
Forsyth Road Elementary
George Greenaway Elementary
Georges Vanier Elementary

District Review Report 2007

Peace Arch Elementary
South Meridian Elementary
T E Scott Elementary
W E Kinvig Elementary
William F. Davidson Elementary
William Watson Elementary

Fleetwood Park Secondary
Frank Hurt Secondary
Guildford Park Secondary
Lord Tweedsmuir Secondary
Panorama Ridge Secondary
Queen Elizabeth Secondary
Semiahmoo Secondary
South Surrey White Rock Learning Centre

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.

Acknowledgments

- The Senior Leadership Team is committed to heightening its focus on success for each student.
- The size of the district requires that responsibility for student achievement be distributed to the assistant superintendents and senior district staff. To that end, the District is in the process of significant reorganization with the goal of aligning support structures to better meet the full range of diverse learner needs.
- The District's strategic plan combined with the needs and priorities at the school level form the basis for the District Accountability/Achievement Contract.
- During the review process the District made a commitment to work to improve success for Aboriginal students. With the inclusion of the Aboriginal district principal on the Leadership Team and the focus of Aboriginal Education Advisory Council, the District is nearing the signing of its first Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.
- The District has an increasing focus on the use of classroom-based assessment to inform instructional practice.
- The District is beginning to develop a Numeracy goal using the same model as its Literacy goal.

Recommendations

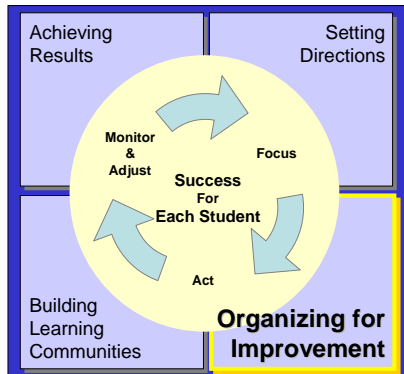
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Implement clear expectations for continuous improvement in each school.
 - Clarify the process schools use to develop school plans.

District Review Report 2007

- Establish the criteria for an acceptable school plan that focuses on success for each student and the intervention that will occur when a school plan is not acceptable.
- Increase the monitoring of and support for school plans to ensure more consistent implementation.
- Clarify the role of the assistant superintendent in assisting schools to “focus, act, monitor and adjust” their school plans.
- Raise the level of commitment for the success of Aboriginal students.
 - Complete the Enhancement Agreement.
 - Recognize the Enhancement Agreement in the District’s strategic plan, District Accountability/Achievement Contract and school plans.
 - Establish clear expectations for the Implementation of the Enhancement Agreement once it is signed.
 - Increase schools’ responsibility for Aboriginal student success.

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.

Acknowledgments

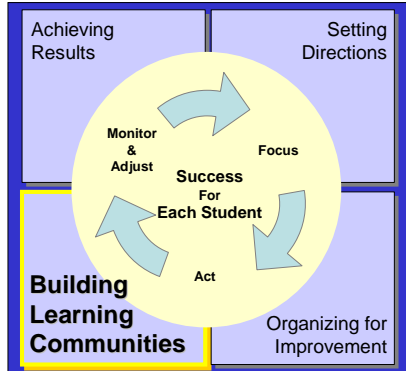
- The District has significantly differentiated funding and staffing formulas to meet the diverse needs of individual school communities.
- The District has developed a comprehensive Literacy strategy that incorporates an assessment tool (RAD 36) which informs instruction, an instructional strategy package (the Developing Readers Program) and a tool which assists teachers in tracking individual student progress.
 - Support is provided for teachers to become proficient in the use of the above resources.
 - Local expertise is used to create district resources that support student achievement.
- Multicultural workers are a valuable resource to schools to help connect them with their diverse communities and to help new immigrant students.
- There is an increasing use of performance standards as data to inform instruction.
- The allocation of a block of staff time for gifted students at secondary schools supports another segment of the District's diverse student community.
- The connection of the assistant superintendents to their area is a structure that will support consistency across the district.
- The ESL Principals' Advisory Focus Group acts as a forum to ensure schools have an avenue for dialogue specific to the needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Ensure that each school has strategies in place to support continuous improvement for vulnerable students, those in the middle, and high achievers.
- Support schools in meeting the needs of Aboriginal students and those of the increasing numbers of new Canadians especially in the early years.
- Strengthen the English as a Second Language (ESL) program.
 - Establish cohesive leadership with respect to the delivery of ESL services.
 - Consider alternative assessment screening other than phonemic awareness.
 - Ensure district-wide understanding of ESL delivery for full-day Kindergarten (language enhancement).
 - Create opportunities for specific training in ESL for all staff in the district.
 - Institute a District K-12 ESL delivery model that supports the development of academic language proficiency in addition to social language skills.
- Strengthen Programs:
 - Assess the effectiveness of the Learning Support Teacher model, particularly as it relates to ESL.
 - Clarify the role of the gifted education program as it pertains to enrichment.
 - Develop a framework and vision for International programs.
- Develop strategies and structures to share the strong practices that occur in many locations throughout the district.

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.

Acknowledgments

- Trustees, senior management and the superintendent are reaching out to all constituents of the District in an attempt to strengthen relations.
- The District, in keeping with its expanded mandate, is increasing the connection between school and community through programs such as the Strong Start Program, Welcome to Kindergarten, and a new and innovative Community-Schools Partnership project.
 - The District is increasing the number of pre-schools in schools.
 - Parent involvement is increasing in early literacy programs (Spark, Flames).
 - The relationship with the District Parent Advisory Council is growing, and the District has worked closely with a group of parents of autistic children.
- The District has made a commitment to enhancing the profile of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and has made recent commitments to heighten the entire issue of Aboriginal student success.
 - The Aboriginal support staff plays a very important role in championing the cause of Aboriginal student success.
- Relationships are becoming increasingly positive throughout the district.
 - Trustees are focused, cohesive, knowledgeable & supportive in working towards “Success for Each Student”.
 - Trustees and the superintendent are visible and proactive at events including school visits, hosting regional forums for parents, meeting with ethnic groups, and meeting with partner groups.
- The District has a strong leadership development program.
 - There are programs for aspiring leaders and current leaders. Complementing these programs are written leadership standards for administrators.
 - The District supports a growth plan for each new administrator.

District Review Report 2007

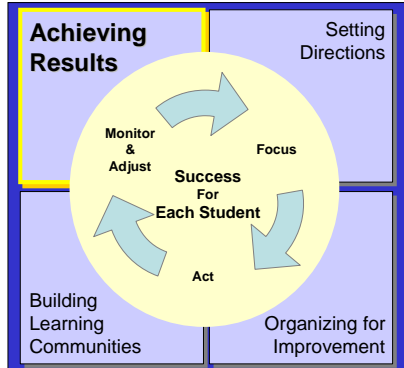
- There are an increasing number of schools with effective Professional Learning Communities that are taking ownership for the creation and implementation of plans for student success.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Increase meaningful parental involvement.
 - Increase parent and, in secondary schools, student involvement in the development and monitoring of school plans.
 - Work with the District Parent Advisory Council to support and strengthen it in its endeavour to be an effective voice for parent involvement in the district.
 - Use parents to help develop parent resources in parent-friendly language.
 - Include parents on appropriate district committees.
- Embrace cultural and linguistic diversity as an attribute that defines the culture of Surrey.
 - Facilitate productive two-way dialogue between schools, community services, immigration services, parents and students from non-English speaking and Aboriginal backgrounds.
 - Engage in public forums that honor and educate ESL families by stressing the value of first language maintenance, how ethnic heritage has a significant impact on identity formation and learning, and the value of ESL classes as a service that builds academic language necessary for school success.
 - Increase the focus on engaging ethnic parents in the education of their children.
- Build communication networks to ensure that parents, staff, and students understand the focus and directions in the district.

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.

Acknowledgments

- The District's Improving Student Learning Committee has a 13 year history of raising student achievement on provincial assessments, particularly Grade 12 exams, from below provincial average to at or above provincial average.
- Participation rates on provincial assessments are significantly above the provincial average.
- The District has robust Apprenticeship and Career Programs which provide a wide range of opportunities for students to find relevance in secondary education and to transition smoothly to post-secondary opportunities.
- There is a vibrant celebration of Aboriginal achievement through awards and ceremonies.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Improve success for Aboriginal students at all levels.
- Improve transition rates for all students but particularly Aboriginal and male students in the senior grades.
- Report improvements using school and district measures including tracking cohorts.
- Monitor results consistently and make adjustments to strategies to ensure success for each student with a focus on the most vulnerable.
- Improve early success by implementing an intensive support program for students at-risk.
- Challenge each school to continuously improve success for each student including vulnerable students, those in the middle and high achievers.

Conclusion

The Review Team was impressed with the School District's immediate response to the conversations held during the Review visit, especially in relation to success for Aboriginal students. Given the strength in the district, the Review Team is confident that Surrey has the capacity and the commitment to address the recommendation in this report and deepen its work to improve success for each student.

District Review Response

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. 36 (Surrey).

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.