

District Review Report
School District No. 40 (New Westminster)

Date October 21 - 25, 2007

Submitted to the Minister of Education



District Review Report 2007

District: 40 (New Westminster)

Superintendent: Dr. John Woudzia

Date of Visit: October 21-25, 2007

Team Chair: Frank Dunham, Superintendent, SD 75 (Mission)

Team Members: Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education
Timma Blain, Curriculum & Instruction Administrator,
SD 57 (Prince George)
Stan Corfe, Parent, SD 35 (Langley)
Peter Gajda, Teacher, SD 53 Okanagan Similkameen
Michael Hooker, Principal SD 19 (Revelstoke)

Context

The City of New Westminster is part of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) and is located in the region's geographic centre.

The New Westminster School District student enrolment is 6,100. The District also enrolls students from Community, Adult, and International Education Programs. Enrolment in the District has grown over the past few years and is projected to continue to increase until 2011.

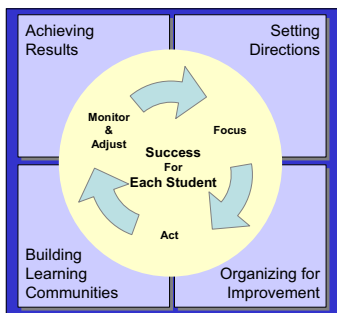
The Purpose of District Reviews

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 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 October 21 and October 23, 2007.

Present for the meetings were:

John Woudzia, Superintendent
Susan Close, Assistant Superintendent
Sandra Pace, Director of Instruction
Janet Grant, Director of Instruction
Al Balanuik, Assistant Superintendent
Doug Wong, Secretary Treasurer

2. Met with staff representatives from:
Aboriginal Advisory Committee
CUPE
DPAC
Early Literacy Advisory Committee
New Westminster Secondary School Student Council
New Westminster Teachers' Union (NWTU)

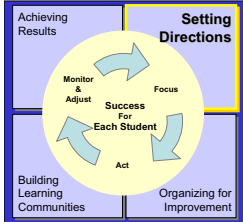
3. Visited the following schools and met with school staff, students and parents:

Alternate programs: POWER, SIGMA, Royal City Alternate Program (RCAP)

Connaught Heights Elementary
F W Howay Elementary
Glenbrook Middle
Herbert Spencer Elementary
Hume Park School
John Robson Elementary
Lord Kelvin Elementary
Lord Tweedsmuir Elementary
Queen Elizabeth Elementary
Queensborough Middle
Richard McBride Elementary

New Westminster 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

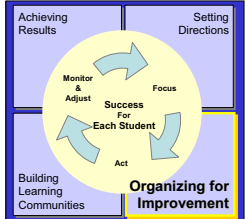
- The Board of Education has expressed a commitment to monitoring and adjusting programs and services to enhance student success.
- A focus on Literacy, specifically the work in SMART Reading is a very successful provincially-recognized initiative that provides a strong foundation from which the district can build to further enhance success for all students.
- Secondary school staff members have linked department goals to the school improvement plan to create a school-wide focus on Literacy, Aboriginal students and struggling learners.
- The emerging work related to Social Responsibility, rooted in the '*Creating Human Potential*' document, has the district positioned to enhance its focus on the whole child.
- There is use of restitution as a tool in developing Social Responsibility.
- Some schools are struggling to develop school plans that reflect the unique needs of their students. There appears to be some confusion about the role of SPCs and the development of school plans.
- Some schools, departments and programs are beginning to use individual and cohort student profiles to track success.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on work begun to:

- Continuously improve success for each student at each school.
- Revise school improvement planning by:
 - Clarifying expectations and processes;
 - Identifying the unique needs at each school;
 - Developing plans that are simple and may resemble action research projects.
- Create a mechanism for formal review of school plans and provide feedback to schools.
- Provide ongoing support for the development of SPCs and provide guidance about their role.
- Focus efforts on Social Responsibility and Numeracy in efforts to improve student achievement.
- Enhance the use of evidence:
 - Develop individual student profiles to identify needs and track progress;
 - Track cohorts over multiple years using district and provincial evidence.

Organizing for Improvement



Expectations:

Continuously improving districts organize 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 connects staff and schools to build capacity.

Observations

- School support grants are provided for initiatives related to the Social Responsibility goal.
- There are a variety of programs to serve students including, but not limited to, alternate programs, Montessori, French Immersion, IB programs, Punjabi.
- Community partners are engaged with the District to support Early Learning.
- There is a strong central district office team.
- Action research is used as a vehicle for improving classroom practice.
- There appears to be a lack of coordinated district support for curriculum implementation in areas other than Literacy.

Recommendations

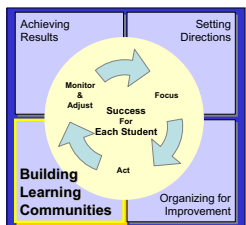
Initiate or build on work begun to:

- Develop coaching/mentoring supports or programs for new principals, vice principals and teachers.
- Support the secondary program by:
 - Providing district-level administrative support for secondary issues;
 - Developing lateral connections with other school districts;
 - Facilitating conversations focused on secondary programs.

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- Expand efforts to support improved instructional practice:
 - Develop lateral capacity in areas beyond Literacy;
 - Apply the strategic design used in Literacy to implement and support Social Responsibility and Numeracy;
 - Support Reading in content areas.
- Establish transition processes for students that:
 - Ensure supports are in place to address students' needs as they move from one grade or program to another and align program delivery at each level;
 - Provide feedback to “sending schools” on student success after transitions from school-to-school are made.
- Support improving instructional practice, ie. use vertical teams which include members from various positions or stakeholder groups to accomplish this.
- Monitor and adjust actions to ensure effective and efficient use of resources.
- Communicate with staff and parents about resource allocations and decision making processes to ensure transparency throughout the system.

Building Learning Communities



Expectations:

In continuously improving districts, there is a shared vision for, and 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 public their plans and progress, they communicate in multiple ways about their work and input is actively sought and valued.

Observations

- Positive relationships as well as a sense of family in the district have created a community of caring in schools.
- All partners expressed a desire to work with the District to support student success.
- The District has enthusiastic leadership at all levels.
- The District is developing connections with community agencies to support student learning. However, there is a need for structured communication, particularly for ESL families.
- Support staff indicate a desire to be more involved in learning opportunities and planning meetings where appropriate
- DPAC is willing to support the District and to build parent capacity, for example, the joint efforts to provide the workshop series "My Child Wouldn't Do That".
- There is strong leadership provided by the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee:
 - Elders are actively involved in defining success for Aboriginal learners;
 - Creating a sense of community has been created within the secondary school whereas this was not as evident in elementary schools.

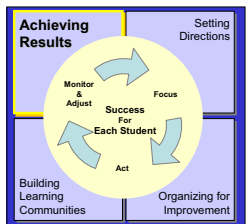
Recommendations

Initiate or build on work begun to:

- Coordinate strategies at the district level to enhance parent support and involvement by:
 - Reaching out to the families of Aboriginal learners;
 - Communicating with and providing support for parents of ESL students.

- Support new principals and vice principals to:
 - Clarify protocol and processes re: operational, resource and program issues;
 - Lead learning at each school.

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

- School level Reading and Writing assessments show growth between the September and May assessments. Trend over time data indicates improvement in district student reading and writing scores.
- There is use of district-wide assessments in Reading and Writing.
- There is evidence of a positive trend in the Dogwood Completion rates for all students.
- For Aboriginal students:
 - Some initial cohort tracking is occurring at the secondary level;
 - A rubric related to Social Responsibility using the Circle of Courage model has been developed;
 - There has been some improvement in transition rates.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on work begun to:

- Improve transition and completion rates for all students.
- Improve success for males through differentiated instruction and the use of appropriate resource materials. Monitor and adjust instruction to get results.
- Improve success for Aboriginal students in a way that reflects the definition of success provided by the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee.
- Define success for every student in the district and monitor and adjust work to get improved results for vulnerable, middle, and high achieving students.

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- Organize and display data in a way that facilitates interpretation and decision-making in order to improve success for students.
- Acquire formative assessment tools to inform instruction and measure progress in Numeracy.

Conclusion

The Team found a strong commitment throughout the district to support success for all students. This support was echoed by partner groups and one New Westminster parent stated "We don't raise children, we raise adults". A strong foundation has been laid by the District in order to move forward and to continue to improve success for each student.

The District Review Team has considered the work of the New Westminster School District to improve student achievement. The Team believes that the District has the capacity and the commitment to respond to the Recommendations in the Report as well as sustain its efforts in areas identified as strengths.

The Team suggests that effective communication and collaboration with the Superintendents of Achievement and Ministry staff in the Governance and Accountability Division will enhance the work to improve success for each student in New Westminster.

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. 40 (New Westminster).

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.