

District Review Report
School District No. 41 (Burnaby)

April 13 – 17, 2008

Submitted to the Ministry of Education



District Review Report 2008

District:	41 (Burnaby)
Superintendent:	Sheila Rooney
Date of Visit:	April 13 - 17, 2008
Team Chair:	Candice Morgan, Superintendent, SD 69 (Qualicum)
Team Members:	Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education Barbara Burkett, Parent, SD 37 (Delta) Ross Brennan, Principal, SD 36 (Surrey) Bertha Lansdowne, Aboriginal Education Coordinator, SD 40 (New Westminster) Grant Mellemstrand, Aboriginal Curriculum Project Coordinator/Teacher, SD 79 (Cowichan Valley) Valerie Overgaard, Associate Superintendent, SD 39 (Vancouver) Janine Roy, Principal, SD 61 (Greater Victoria) Renee Wentland, Coordinator, Ministry of Education

Context

School District 41 serves a diverse community of learners.

The District enrolls over 23,000 school-aged students in 40 elementary schools and 8 secondary schools. In addition, the District also provides a comprehensive Adult and Continuing Education Program to over 15,000 part-time students, and a growing Summer Elementary and Secondary Program that enrolls close to 5,000. Nearly 800 of the District's students are of Aboriginal descent, and ESL students represent 17 percent of the student enrolment. The District has recently opened a Welcome Centre for immigrant families to ease their transition to schools and the community, and to connect them with support and services.

Significant progress has been made in establishing goals in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement and the signing of the Agreement will be June 4, 2008. District enrolment continues to remain stable with a slight decrease in overall enrolment for the 2007/08 school year. The District offers a number of alternative education programs and also operates several Provincial Resource Programs, including the B.C. Provincial School for the Deaf.

The District is undergoing a planned transition to new district leadership as the current Superintendent is retiring in July 2008, which will result in a number of changes to the senior district leadership team.

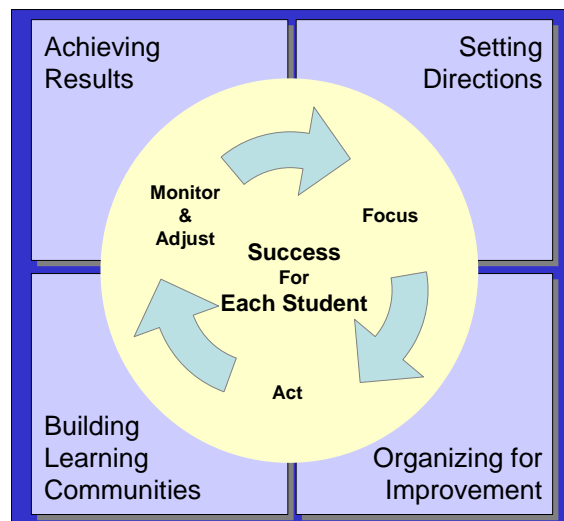
The Purpose of District Review

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:

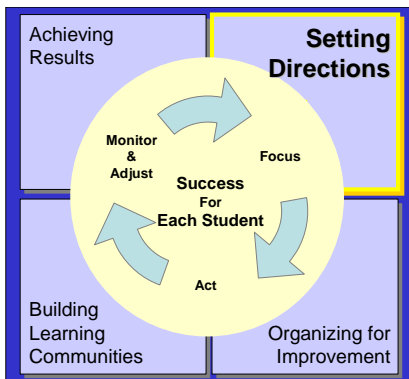
1. Met with district senior staff on April 13 and 14 2008. Present for the meetings were:
 - Sheila Rooney, Superintendent of Schools
 - Claudio Morelli, Assistant Superintendent
 - Kevin Kaardal, Assistant Superintendent
 - Elliott Grieve, Associate Superintendent
 - Greg Frank, Secretary Treasurer
 - Gina Niccoli-Moen, Director of Instruction Program and Curriculum
 - Heather Hart, Director of Instruction Program and Curriculum
 - John White, Director of Instruction Learning Support Services
 - Marguerite Henderson, Director of Instruction Learning Transition Services
 - Dorothy Joyce, District Principal Zonal School Support
 - Deborah Simak, District Principal Learning Support Services
 - Douglas Ibbott, District Principal Zonal School support
 - Donna Scott, District Principal Career Programs
 - Rennie Maierle, District Principal Secondary Alternate Learning
 - Lyn Daniels, Program Consultant Aboriginal Education
 - Don Nordheimer, District Principal Adult Learning Programs

2. Met with Board of Education:
 - Kathy Corrigan, Chair
 - Diana Mumford, Vice-Chair
 - Ron Burton, Helen Chang, Tony Coccia & Larry Hayes, School Trustees

3. Met with representatives of groups including:
 - District Student Advisory Council
 - District Staff Development Team
 - District Parents Advisory Council
 - Alternate Programs Staff
 - Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Committee

4. Met with school staff, students and parents at the following schools:
 - Aubrey Elementary
 - Brentwood Park Elementary
 - Capitol Hill Elementary
 - Forest Grove Elementary
 - Gilpin Elementary
 - Montecito Elementary
 - Morley Elementary
 - Taylor Park Elementary
 - Westridge Elementary
 - Burnaby Central Secondary
 - Burnaby Mountain Secondary
 - Burnaby North Secondary
 - Byrne Creek Secondary
 - Cariboo Hill Secondary
 - Edmonds Community
 - Stride Avenue Community

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

- There is a district-wide commitment to continuous improvement and success for each student through a learner-centred approach.
 - The District's expanded definition of success, which underlies the Learning Transition Strategic Plan, acknowledges the diversity of students, focuses on each student, their strengths and needs, in order to be successful on their own pathway.
- In schools, and in the District, the process for setting directions is reflective and focused on the needs of students. The use of information from assessments at all levels guides decision-making.
 - The District and schools have staff, parent and student involvement in setting goals.
 - Committees at the district and school levels review goals and alignment between school priorities and district directions.
 - The District has established an annual process where teams visit each school to review school goals through a focused improvement conversation.
 - Teams consist of trustees, school and district staff as well as parent and student representatives. School communities noted that the use of guiding questions and the School Planning Rubric to review goals and priorities has made school planning more dynamic.
 - The Social Responsibility goal is embedded in culture and practice. The District is now considering other priorities.
- The District has an ongoing focus on Literacy, having identified it as fundamental.
 - Schools and the community are engaged in a comprehensive review of the multiple supports and programs that are part of the district and community Literacy Plan.
 - The easily understood, graphically illustrated "Literacy Story" is unique in the province and an exemplary way to describe the work in the area.

District Review Report 2008

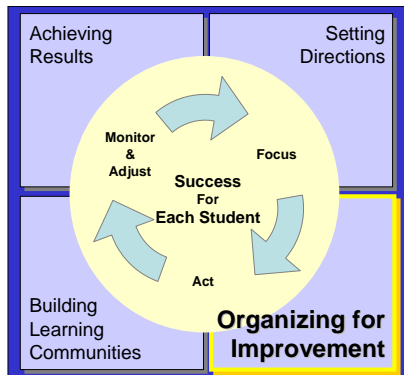
- In schools, it was clear that there is a commitment to continuous assessment and the use of data to plan for learning.
 - Since the last District Review, there has been impressive progress in this area.
 - Reading assessments occur regularly and are used throughout the district (i.e. Standard Reading Assessment (Faye Brownlie), Reading 44, Benchmarks, Alberta Diagnostic, etc.)
- The District is working to improve success for Aboriginal students and after an extensive, multi-year consultative process is about to sign their first Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Complete the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.
 - Act on the stated commitment to work with the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Committee to implement the Agreement across the district.
- Revise planning documents so that they reflect the depth of work underway to meet the needs of “every single child.”
 - Results from the internal District Team visits, and addenda to school plans can guide this process.
 - Refine the District Achievement Contract.
 - Focus on clarity and simplicity.
 - Use school and district evidence to track student progress.
 - Set limited, specific targets.
- Enhance the use of assessment for learning as a tool to inform decisions about priorities, directions and supports for classroom practice.

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 has a solid foundation for all of its work based on success for each child. Alignment and coherence are key strategies used to sustain and further enhance improvement efforts. Supports to build capacity include:
 - Emphasis on district-wide professional development through the Staff Development Advisory Committee and a district-wide calendar for professional development (Pathways to Professional Learning) student success.
 - Opportunities for connections with other schools, networking, and lateral capacity building.
 - District-initiated school-based grants process which is effective in fostering innovation, collaboration and the honouring of teachers' work.
 - Differentiated instruction and programming for diverse learners.
 - Restitution Training and Tribes In-Service programs to support the Social Responsibility focus.
 - The Learning Support Services Strategic Plan helps guides directions.
 - District Helping Teachers, Resource Teachers and Program Consultants are connected to families of schools.
 - District supports staff development through specific allocations of funding.
 - Staff at schools cited this allocation as a significant contribution to their efforts to improve student outcomes, as it allowed increased opportunities for collaboration, professional learning, curricular integration supported by Helping Teachers and Program Consultants, mentoring, and inquiry.

- Community connections are very strong in this District.
 - School staffs and coordinators in community schools engage with various ministries and agencies to provide services and supports for students and families.
 - Service through cost sharing/community partnerships helps to promote student success. (eg. Community Schools - Parks & Recreation Partnership, Family Literacy Centres, Welcome Centre for Refugees.)

District Review Report 2008

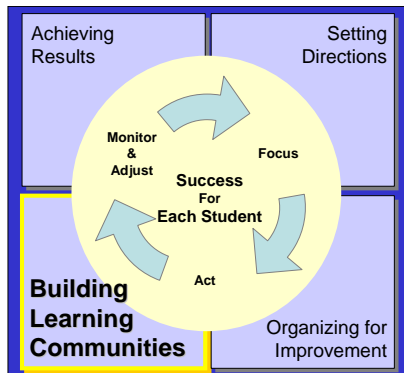
- Schools are working to improve success for individual students and expressed appreciation for the District's flexibility in supporting their unique needs while maintaining a clear district vision. Schools are:
 - Monitoring strategies used in school planning.
 - Differentiating instruction.
 - Restructuring timetables to accommodate student needs.
 - Holding weekly caucus meetings at secondary schools between students, staff and administration.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Ensure the District has mechanisms for coordinating initiatives and data gathered as a result of implementing initiatives.
 - Evaluate programs and strategies in place for effectiveness in improving student success.
- Focus on student transitions as outlined in the Learning Transitions Strategic Plan.
 - Provide guidance regarding processes to facilitate the transition from elementary to secondary.
 - Facilitate deeper dialogue about individual students to ensure each student's successful transition to secondary school.
 - Complete the review of secondary alternate programs.
- Build a district-wide plan to accommodate the needs of refugee learners and provide differentiated support for those staff serving refugee students and their families.
- Enhance and sustain collaborative time.

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

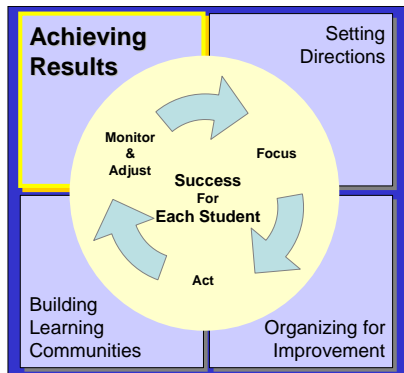
- The District is a professional learning community that has a shared vision and moral purpose, in a culture of collaborative inquiry focused on the success of each student.
- The District and schools communicate in multiple ways about their work. Input is actively sought and valued.
 - The District has strong relationships with community agencies and the business community to support student success.
- Shared leadership is evident in all schools and across the district at all levels.
 - There are many focused professional development opportunities for principals, teachers, support staff and parents.
 - Individual professional growth plans for teachers are a positive, unique feature in the District.
 - Leadership development in the district is both a strength and a challenge.
 - There are well-developed mentorship programs for new teachers, teacher leaders and new administrators.
 - The challenge for leadership development is succession planning.
- Parents are partners in this District as evidenced by strong involvement in PACs, SPCs and Community Councils.
 - Parent representatives participated on district team visits to schools for discussions about progress in school planning. The Parent Involvement Task Force is an important link for communication between parents and the District.
 - The relationship between Aboriginal parents and the District has been strengthened through the development of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.
- The District Student Advisory Council is a key component of the District Learning Community.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Implement a thoughtful and coherent succession plan to ensure leadership sustainability.
- Deepen the dialogue with community partners to support:
 - Students in the early years, and
 - Adult learners.
- Work with parent leaders at all levels to engage ESL, Aboriginal and refugee students and their families.

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

- Using school, district and provincial evidence, results are strong and improving in many areas.
 - There is a positive trend in Dogwood completion rates for all students.
 - District and school results for Literacy are high and showing positive growth.
- The District is proud of its achievement, and acknowledges the need to improve in some areas. Specific areas include the performance of Aboriginal, immigrant and vulnerable students.
- Schools are committed to the use of assessment to inform instruction.
 - A variety of assessment measures are used in Literacy. Results are used to adjust strategies and focus instruction.
 - There is widespread use of the Performance Standards to monitor Literacy and Social Responsibility results.
 - Some schools are exploring ways to use individual student profiles to track progress and to inform learning and instruction.
- There is a partnership with Simon Fraser University to develop a Social Responsibility assessment tool based on the Restitution model, which can be used to monitor results of this initiative.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Improve the success of Aboriginal students through the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.
- Explore and expand the use of individual student learning profiles.
- Monitor the progress of individual students.
 - Evaluate interventions for effectiveness.
 - Adjust as necessary to improve success for each student.

Conclusion

The District Review Team was impressed with the energy, enthusiasm and innovative practices throughout the District in support of each student in Burnaby. The district culture, processes and relationships demonstrate great capacity and exemplary commitment to improving student success.

The Review Team acknowledges the efforts of the District to be attuned to the voices of its diverse community and its support for individual students. The District is commended for its comprehensive response to the last review and the willingness to continuously reflect on results and the efficacy of current practices to better meet student needs.

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. 41 (Burnaby).

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.