

District Review Report

School District No. 41 (Burnaby)

April 4 - 6, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Gary Doi, Superintendent, School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha)

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District Name:	Burnaby
District Number:	41
Superintendent:	Sheila Rooney
Date of Visit:	April 4 - 6, 2005
Team Chair:	Gary Doi, Superintendent, SD 67 (Okanagan Skaha)
Team Members:	Garnet Ayres, Assistant Superintendent, SD 37 (Delta) Glenda Bilinsky, Parent, Brentwood Bay Rick Davis, Superintendent, Liaison, Ministry of Education Eileen Eby, Principal, SD 61 (Victoria) Charlie Etchell, Assistant Superintendent, SD 35 (Langley) Pat Haslop, Assistant Superintendent, SD 36 (Surrey) Denise Johnson, Principal, SD 39 (Vancouver) Cathy McCubbin, Teacher, SD 52 (Prince Rupert) Peter Molloy, Director of Support Services, SD 23 (Central Okanagan) Helen Myers, Manager, Ministry of Education

Context

School District 41 (Burnaby) is the fourth largest district in the Province with a student population of 24,500. The district has 40 elementary and 7 secondary schools. The school district enrolls approximately 4,500 students (18%) in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, 753 students (2.8 %) of Aboriginal ancestry, and 1,317 students (5.2%) in French Immersion programs. Burnaby School District offers a range of educational programs such as: French Immersion, Advanced Placement, International, Soccer and Hockey academies as well as alternate education and technology based education.

Burnaby School District has had a long history of partnerships and of providing programs and services for children, youth and families. It has collaborated with the City of Burnaby, community organizations and agencies, Simon Fraser University and the Province to establish various local, district-wide and Provincial programs. As an example, the District offers a comprehensive Adult and Continuing Education program to 17,000 part-time adult learners. The District has also been home to the Provincial School for the Deaf since 1993 and oversees the Provincial Oral Program. As well, the District has established seven community schools which provide a variety of educational, recreational, cultural and social opportunities for young people and adults in response to needs defined by the community.

The District Review Team observed many outstanding educational initiatives in the schools and district that reflect a desire and commitment to improve student achievement. It is especially noteworthy that the District and its education partners - students, parents, staff and community - are actively pursuing the mission... ***to prepare and support an inclusive, caring community of learners for the challenges of a changing tomorrow.***

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Summary of Process

The purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the District, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the District's work in improving student achievement by:

- Reviewing school district and school achievement data;
- Reviewing the school district accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement;
- Determining the capacity of the school district to support schools in improving student achievement;
- Identifying promising practices that might assist other School Districts and schools in plans to improve student achievement; and
- Making recommendations to the School District and to the Minister about improving student achievement.

School District 41 (Burnaby) is 1 of 20 districts to be reviewed in the 2004-05 school year as part of the Ministry of Education's accountability cycle.

To this end, members of the District Review Team met with:

- The District management team and representatives from all partner groups.
- School Planning Councils (and other representatives) of 7 secondary schools and 16 elementary schools for approximately two hours each to discuss their school plans and the Ten Points of Inquiry. The following schools were visited: 12th Avenue, Alpha, Aubrey, Burnaby Central, Burnaby Mountain, Burnaby North, Burnaby South, Buckingham, Capitol Hill, Cariboo Hill, Chaffey-Burke, Clinton, Forest Grove, Inman, Kitchener, Lochdale, Maywood, Moscrop, Nelson, Seaforth, Stoney Creek, Stride/Taylor Park, and Suncrest.
- The District Parent Advisory Council Executive.

In addition to the District's Accountability Contract and school plans, the District Review Team considered:

- The District Performance Report (1999-2004, Ministry of Education)
- Student achievement in reading (2004-2007)
- The Aboriginal Report (Sept. 2004, Ministry of Education)
- The School Planning Council Resource Package (2004-05, SD 41)
- The Burnaby Leadership Development Program

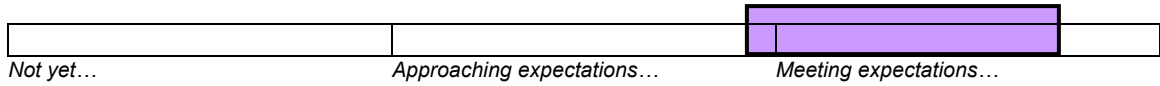
The Team wishes to thank the School District for its hospitality, its excellent preparation for the Team's visit and the warm welcome it received. The Team was impressed with the commitment and dedication of the district staff, school trustees, school personnel, parents and students in their efforts to improve student achievement.

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Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*

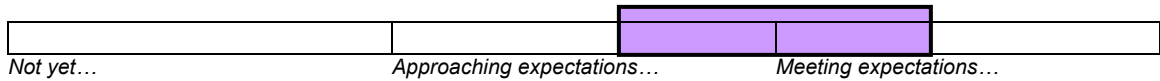
Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



- District goals are focused on improving student achievement in the areas of reading, writing and social responsibility.
- The District and most schools have identified goals and specific objectives that address the needs of identified groups of learners.

2. *Rationale:*

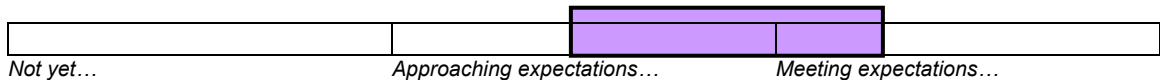
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The District and some schools have established a rationale based on evidence linked to student achievement.
- Schools are in various stages of seeking authentic evidence to identify and support goals.

3. *Data:*

Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the district goals and is used to monitor progress.



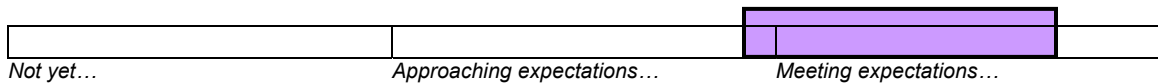
- Many schools are beginning to critically evaluate existing data.
- Schools are exploring the use of a variety of authentic assessment tools.
- The use of Performance Standards to inform classroom practice is emerging.
- The District and many schools are in the process of collecting baseline data.

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4. *Strategies:*

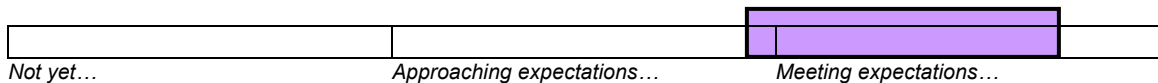
Improving districts and schools have focused, well-organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



- The District has developed a 3-year professional growth plan to build instructional and assessment capacity to help develop students' reading skills (facilitated by Faye Brownlie and involving 17 schools in Year 1).
- The Kindergarten assessment summary has been developed to identify students at-risk.
- The District has provided well-organized and focused professional development to support district and school goals (e.g., performance standards, restitution, Reading 44).
- Aboriginal learners are supported district-wide with the Circle of Courage initiative.
- Many secondary schools have undertaken cross curricular literacy initiatives.
- Schools are at various stages of developing comprehensive and connected school improvement plans.

5. *Structures:*

Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.

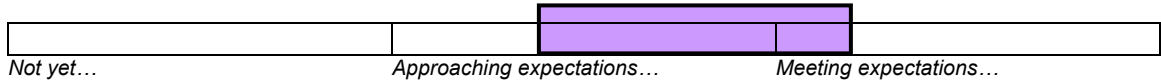


- The District has established program consultants to support its district goals.
- The District has created a Reading Initiative professional development program to focus on authentic assessment and instruction.
- The District and the City of Burnaby continue to support Community Schools.
- The Parent and Family Literacy Centres and the Learning Together Program are examples of how some schools are actively engaging parents in the school's literacy and social responsibility achievement agenda.
- Schools recognize the importance of creating collaborative time for teachers to plan and implement school goals.
- Schools are aligning structures to help advance their achievement goals.
- The District has collaborated with SFU to undertake various educational initiatives. Examples of this are the Masters program in Educational Leadership and the Graduate Diploma Program in Literacy, in which over 40 district teachers are enrolled.

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6. *Results:*

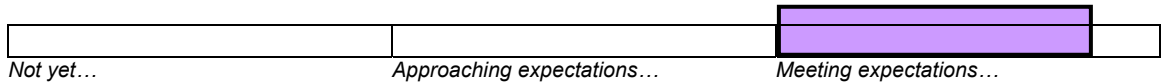
Improving districts and schools monitor and make adjustments to get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- The District and some schools are using Performance Standards to monitor student progress and to begin to inform instructional practice.
- The District and most schools are analyzing data to support goals.

7. *Communication:*

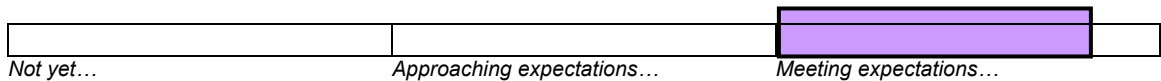
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



- There is meaningful communication among the district, schools, students and parents about student achievement.
- Schools are using various means to communicate with their diverse school communities.
- Students in many secondary and elementary schools are actively involved in discussions about achievement.

8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*

Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued.



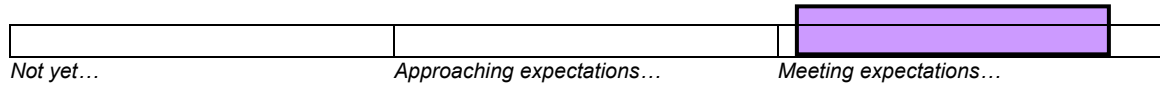
- There is a strong alignment between the district and school plans.
- The District plays an active role in supporting school goals.
- District initiatives promote collaboration and networking among schools.

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9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement:*

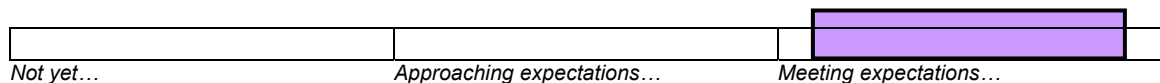
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- Parents are actively and meaningfully involved in working with school and district staff to improve the achievement of students.
- The School Planning Councils (SPC's) are well established and provided with training and resources to support their work each year.
- The District Parent Advisory Committee is actively involved in supporting local PAC's and in advancing the achievement agenda.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*

Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.



- Leadership is collaborative at all levels of the system with a focus on improving student achievement.
- It is evident that leadership is shared among all partner groups.
- Students play a significant leadership role in Secondary School Planning Councils.
- Students play a significant role by providing leadership in schools and at the district level through the District Student Advisory Council.
- The district's leadership development initiatives are inclusive, comprehensive, forward-thinking and focused on the vision of 'improving student achievement'.
- School leaders (teachers, administrators, parents, students) acknowledge the strong support of district staff.

Strengths

The Team congratulates the District on the following strengths:

- Distributed and collaborative leadership of all partners (parents, students, teachers, support staff, administrators, district staff) at all levels of the system.
- Strategic support and leadership provided by District staff.
- Partnerships with SFU and the City of Burnaby.

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- The Restitution Self-Discipline initiative to build relationships, develop motivation and create caring places to learn.
- The Eagle Feather celebration that recognizes the achievements of Aboriginal learners.
- Community schools which provide a variety of educational, recreational, cultural and social opportunities for young people and adults.
- SPC training and resources.
- The District Late Literacy project explores best practices for students transitioning from Grade 7 to 8.
- The Circle of Courage project to support aboriginal learners.
- Creative literacy practices (e.g., Battle of the Books; Book boxes; Home reading programs; student book publishing; Stop, Drop & Read; Writer's workshop).
- Collaboration in secondary schools.
- Extensive adult and continuing education program.
- Action research projects focusing on student achievement.

Promising Practices

The Team recognizes the following District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:

- Secondary schools have designed various ways in which teachers from all disciplines collaborate to improve student achievement.
- The District Student Advisory Council which involves student representatives from all secondary schools meets monthly to provide advice and support to the District.
- The Student Achievement in Reading initiative: a 3-year, interactive plan, which engages teachers and administrators in exploring assessment for learning strategies.
- The Literacy Centre and Learning Together preschool initiatives designed to engage parents in their child's learning and introduce parents to the school system.
- The Restitution Self-discipline initiative, widely used to build relationships, develop motivation and create caring places to learn.
- A two-year Teacher Leadership Development program initiated by the District to increase capacity for instructional leadership.

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Recommendations

The Team respectfully suggests to the District the following recommendations to strengthen the school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results.

- Continue to work with schools to refine the school plan template so that goals developed are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound).
- Continue to engage administrators and teachers in professional learning related to assessment literacy.
- Work with schools to assist in analyzing data for the purpose of setting direction for improving student achievement.
- Work with schools to develop a systematic approach to collecting, tracking and monitoring school and district data.
- Continue to examine the linkages between goals, rationale, data and strategies based on assessment information regarding aboriginal students and male students.
- Provide opportunities to share the exemplary practices among schools in the district.