

District Review Report 2006/07
School District No. 44 (North Vancouver)

April 29 - May 2, 2007

Submitted to the Ministry of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Dr. Keven Elder, Superintendent, School District No. 63 (Saanich)



District Review Report 2007

District: 44 (North Vancouver)

Superintendent: John Lewis

Date of Visit: April 30 - May 2, 2007

Team Chair: Dr. Keven Elder, Superintendent, SD 63 (Saanich)

Team Members: Kevin Argue, Principal, SD 51 (Boundary)
Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education
Bonnie Chappell, Director, School Services, SD 57 (Prince George)
Michael Malfesi, Principal, SD 75 (Mission)
Laurey Roodenburg, Parent, SD 28 (Quesnel)

Context

The North Vancouver School District enrolls 17,191 students and employs 2,530 teachers, support staff and administrators or managers. With an annual operating budget of \$131 million, the District is currently engaged in an extensive capital program with \$17 million worth of capital projects underway alongside an ongoing analysis of the need for school consolidation due to enrolment decline. One significant success of the District has been its development of *Reading 44*, *Writing 44* and *Math 44* curricular resources.

The District operates 28 elementary schools, 7 secondary schools and 2 alternate schools or programs, as well as a residential Outdoor School located in Squamish, B.C. The District offers a comprehensive K-12 program that includes early and late French Immersion, ESL programs, a variety of programs for students with exceptional learning needs, summer school and continuing education, the artists for kids trust, and a 600-student International Program. In 2006, the District signed its first Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement in support of its 572 Aboriginal students, the majority of whom are from the Squamish and Tseil Watuth Nations.

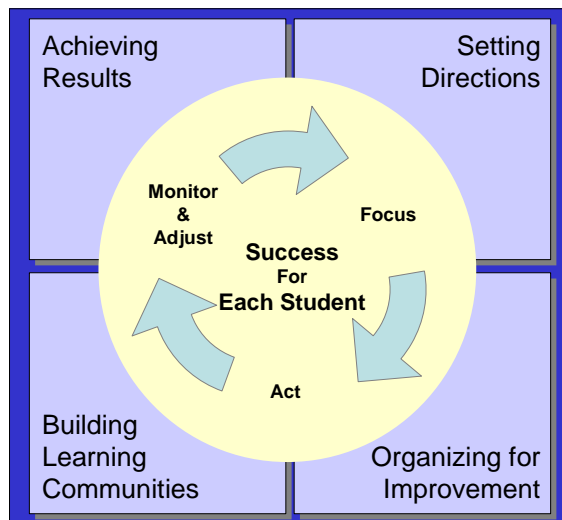
The Purpose of District Reviews

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 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 evening and Monday morning. Present for the meetings were:

John Lewis, Superintendent of Schools
Bryn Roberts, Dave Pearce and Larry Johnson, Assistant Superintendents
Irene Young, Secretary-Treasurer
Barbara Walter, Director of Human Resources

Members of the School Services Leadership Team:

Tim Jones
Ken Neale
Julie Parker
Joanne Robertson
Beatrice Silver
Shannon Sharp (Resource person for the
School Services Leadership Team)

2. Met with representative groups including:

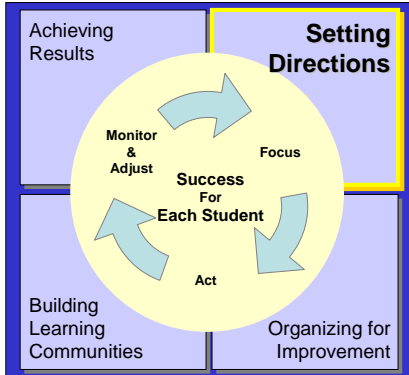
Aboriginal Education Council
North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council
North Vancouver Teachers Association
Principals
Trustees

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

Larson Elementary
Norgate Community Elementary
Plymouth Elementary
Queen Mary Elementary
Ross Road Elementary
Seymour Heights Elementary

Argyle Secondary
Carson Graham Secondary
Seycove Secondary Community

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.

Acknowledgments

- An emerging understanding of the need to find more authentic assessment practices in support of consistent planning for improving student achievement.
- The positive environment in North Vancouver schools.
- The links between conditions for learning and the District's safe and caring schools initiative.
- The District's recent launch of a strategic visioning process using the principles of Appreciative Inquiry.

Recommendations

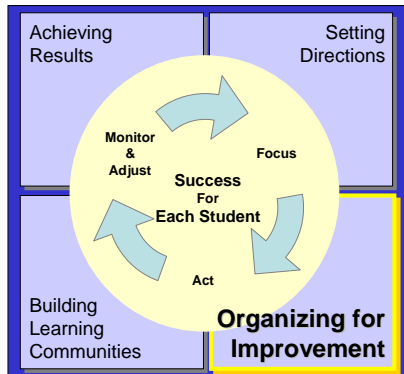
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Replace the existing planning process with one that:
 - Clarifies the planning cycle including having school plans lead to the District Accountability/Achievement Contract.
 - Simplifies all planning documents and school plans so that everyone can own and understand the improvement agenda.
 - Builds capacity in the district to use authentic assessment as a basis for all planning.
 - Removes extraneous data from the District Accountability/Achievement Contract.
- Refocus school-based planning to:
 - Base planning decisions on authentic assessment and collaborative inquiry.
 - Reflect the needs and priorities of the school.

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- Engage parents and students in the planning process.
- Develop common, authentic, district-wide assessment practices that support instruction and, at the same time, form a foundation for planning.
- Develop a user-friendly software environment for storage and analysis of student achievement data, focusing on the use of authentic assessment evidence in ways that are useful, first and foremost, to teachers.

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.

Acknowledgments

- Strong curricular and instructional initiatives including the Instructional Institute, Collegial Conferencing, and a range of action research projects.
- The District's processes to provide interventions for Kindergarten students.
- The completion and implementation of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.
- The strength of the partnerships with the First Nations and the effectiveness of the District Aboriginal Advisory Council.
- The District's support for students with autism.
- The work of the secretary-treasurer in supporting the needs of students through the careful alignment of program and resources with student need.
- The efforts of staff to ensure the continuation and success of the "artists for kids" program.
- The provision of administrative time for supervision of instruction.
- The success of the Outdoor School located in Squamish.

Recommendations

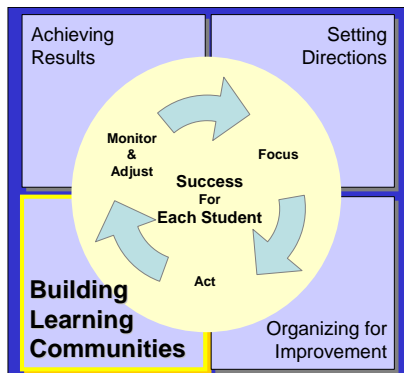
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Build capacity to support the needs of every child, especially the most vulnerable, and every school, especially those with the greatest number of vulnerable children.
- Implement strategies that challenge high achieving schools to provide a range of programs to meet the needs of all learners.

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- Develop and implement strategies that integrate the work of all district leadership. The team observed responsibilities and roles at the district level may at times occur in isolation from each other.
- Increase school responsibility for decision making and allocation of resources.
- Build capacity of parents, teachers and administrators in the areas of assessment literacy, planning for improvement, and leadership for learning.
- Establish a district-wide protocol for implementing authentic assessment practices in support of teachers better understanding the learning needs of children, while at the same time providing school-wide and district-wide assessment evidence that can be used for organizational planning and improvement. This approach of using consistent authentic assessments, preferably based on B.C. Performance Standards, will not only be good for students, it will reduce the reliance on external measures such as FSA.
- Revise the distribution of resources to support vulnerable students and enable schools to develop plans, even with fluctuations in transient populations.
- Develop or clarify a process for investigating choice programs.
- Analyze the ways in which alternate programs are used to support success for each student, particularly in the area of increasing the number of students who return to their neighbourhood schools to graduate.
- Simplify school plans and the District Accountability/Achievement Contract by prioritizing objectives, placing comprehensive details in appendices, and using more reader friendly language.

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.

Acknowledgements

- The rich relationships that exist among partner groups and individuals throughout the district.
- The partnership and relationships that the District has with the Squamish Nation.
- The partnership and relationships that the District has with the Tsleil Watuth Nation.
- Participation of partner groups, including students, on district committees.
- The cohesive and thorough professional development opportunities provided through the Instructional Institute, which provides educators with a wealth of tools to meet the needs of students.
- The time and resources provided to the process of collegial conferencing.
- The trustees high level of knowledge of and commitment to all of the activities and programs that make up the North Vancouver School District.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

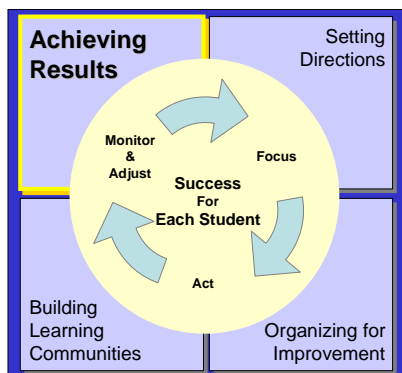
- Create a culture of respect for all people, all needs, all circumstances and all geographic regions in the District.
- Treat all schools from all regions of the district with equal respect and celebrate their unique successes.
- Expect all schools to support meaningful involvement of parents, both in terms of purposeful connections in support of children and in terms of meaningful

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involvement in decision making. This will include involving School Planning Councils in ways that give them voice in school planning in partnership with teaching staff.

- Engage teachers in a dialogue regarding the best ways to support a program of district-wide authentic assessment in a way that fully respects the provincial political agenda regarding accountability and teachers' need for autonomy.
- Broaden the District's examination of current best practices, many of which will enhance the "44" programs, in areas such as balanced literacy, the use of leveled texts and school-wide guided reading.

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.

Acknowledgements

- Strong results in the District overall.
- The successes of many North Vancouver schools with large numbers of vulnerable students.
- The significant movement in relation to Aboriginal achievement and completion rates since the 2004 District Review.
- The considerable attention being paid to improving life chances of Aboriginal learners, including the exemplary work at Carson Graham Secondary School that has led to the improved transition rates for Aboriginal learners.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Build a culture of continuous improvement for all students in the district, the most vulnerable, those in the middle and high achievers.
- Focus on improving transitions of First Nations students from Grade 10 to Grade 11.
- Work within the community to explore the question of what matters most for vulnerable and First Nations students in order to create improved results including those evidenced by authentic assessments, provincial assessments and other measures such as transition and completion rates.
- Create a base of authentic assessment evidence from which to make school and district plans and gauge results on a wide array of indicators that are relevant to North Vancouver schools and the community at large.

Conclusion

The District Review Team is confident that the North Vancouver School District has the capacity and the commitment to re-focus its planning effort and to work in community to address the needs of its vulnerable students and add value to the life chances of all students in the district.

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. 44 (North Vancouver).

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.