

District Review Report

**School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)**

March 14 - 16, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair  
Ron Samborski, Superintendent,  
School District No. 60 (Peace River North)

**District Review Report  
2004/2005**

District Name:	Nicola-Similkameen
District Number:	58
Superintendent:	Robert Peacock
Date of Visit:	March 14-16, 2005
Team Chair:	Ron Samborski, Superintendent, SD 60 (Peace River North)
Team Members:	Judy Arnold, Manager, Ministry of Education Chris Burgess, Literacy Resource Teacher, SD 70 (Port Alberni) Bonnie Chappell, Director, SD 57 (Prince George) Libby Hart, Vice-Principal, SD 91 (Nechako Lakes) Ted Johnson, Principal, SD 37 (Delta) Garth O. Makepeace, Parent, SD 59 (Peace River South) David Rattray, Aboriginal Counsellor, SD 60 (Peace River North) John W. Spry, Assistant Superintendent, SD 72 (Campbell River)

**Context**

School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen), enrolling 2,900 students, serves a population of approximately 16,000 people living in the communities and surrounding areas of Merritt and Princeton. Approximately 37% of the District's population is rural. Forestry, the public sector and tourism employ most of the people in this area. Approximately 22% of Merritt's population and 4% of Princeton's population is of Aboriginal ancestry.

Students from the Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, Shackan, Upper Nicola and Upper Similkameen bands and off-reserve make up 37% of the District's student population. In September 2004, the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement of School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen) was signed between the District, Ministry of Education, six local bands and the Metis Association. The percentage of students with Aboriginal ancestry and students enrolling in Electronic Distributive Learning continues to increase, while the total student population continues to decline. This decline has resulted in restructuring challenges for the District.

The District's mission statement reflects a commitment to student achievement, effective relationships and effective instruction.

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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. The specific purposes of the review are to:

- Review school district and school achievement data;
- Review the School District accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement;
- Determine the capacity of the School District to support schools in improving student achievement;
- Identify promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen) is one 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, the Team:

- Reviewed the District's Accountability Contract and School Improvement Plans;
- Reviewed the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement;
- Reviewed school and district performance data and satisfaction survey data;
- Met with members of the Board, senior staff, principals and vice-principals, and partner group representatives to review the District's characteristics and its Accountability Contract;
- Met with representatives from the Parent Advisory Councils;
- Met with representatives of the First Nations Education Council;
- Visited two secondary, one middle, one distance education, seven elementary schools

The Team visited Collettsville, Diamond Vale, John Allison, Merritt Bench, Merritt Central, Nicola Canford and Vermilion Forks Elementary; Coquihalla Middle; Merritt, Princeton Secondary schools and the South Central Interior Distance Education school.

### Acknowledgements

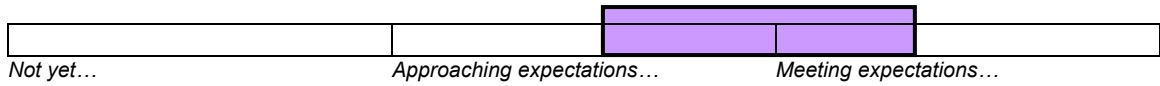
The District Review Team members appreciated the warm welcome encountered throughout the District. The Team wishes to thank School District No. 58 for its time and gracious hospitality. The Team commends the school community for its passion for education and commitment to students.

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**Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement**

**1. Goals:**

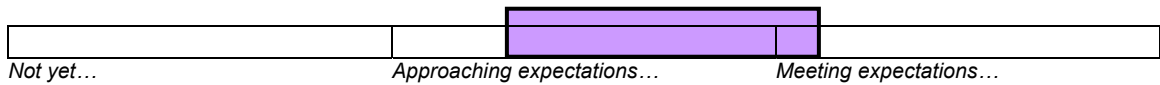
Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



- The District goals reflect the priorities of schools and are focused on improving student achievement.
- Most schools are using evidence to determine goals focused on student achievement.
- A few schools have goals and objectives focused on specific subgroups of students.

**2. Rationale:**

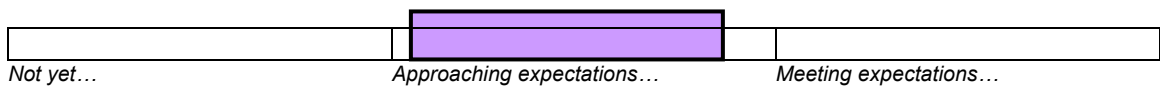
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The District and most schools are using relevant evidence linked to student achievement.
- A few schools are using multiple sources of evidence that are clearly linked to student achievement.

**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.



- The District and schools are in varying stages of using multiple sources of evidence to set goals and establish baseline data.
- A few schools are in the initial stages of analyzing and interpreting school data, monitoring results, and making adjustments to improve student achievement.
- A few schools are disaggregating data to deepen understanding of the needs of specific groups of students.

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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 fosters opportunities for professional development that focus on student learning.
- Many schools have effectively implemented practices such as Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) and Instructional Intelligence.
- The rationale for strategies is not consistently articulated or linked to goals.

### 5. *Structures:*

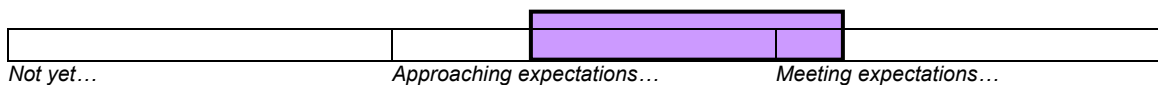
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



- The reconfiguration of Princeton schools shows promise for enhancing the achievement of all students.
- The District has maintained resource support in schools, i.e. special education, library support.
- The District supports school level structural changes such as All Day Kindergarten, and First Nations Reading Intervention Program.
- Some schools have made structural changes (time, resources, personnel) to support the implementation of their goals.

### 6. *Results:*

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



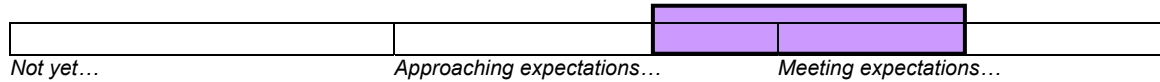
- The District uses results to monitor and adjust practices.
- Some schools are using results to refine and adjust strategies and practices.
- A few schools are using results to monitor and adjust for specific groups of students.

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### 7. *Communication:*

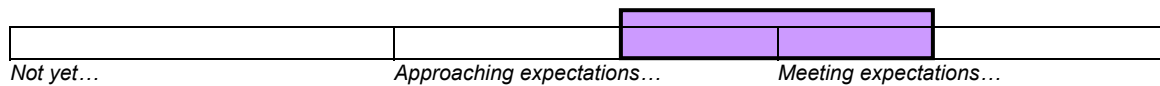
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



- The District fosters strong relationships and open and respectful communication with the school community.
- Schools are building the processes for communicating about their work to enhance student achievement.
- Opportunities for dialogue are frequent, encouraged and valued.

### 8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*

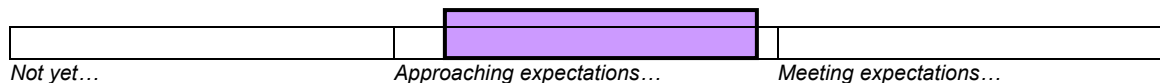
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued.



- The District goals reflect the priorities of the schools and are focused on improving student learning.
- Many schools express appreciation for district support as they address their goals.
- There is a process for reviewing and approving school plans.

### 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.



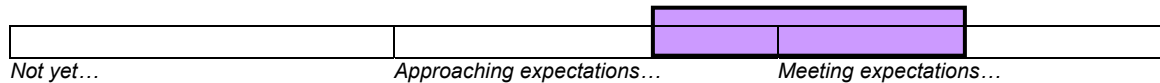
- Many parents participate in school functions and activities.
- Some parents are actively involved in setting goals to improve student achievement.
- Schools are examining ways to engage specific groups of parents.

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### 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.



- The District models shared leadership, collegiality, and the importance of positive working relationships.
- Leadership in all partner groups is evident and encouraged.

### Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement:

- Passionate educators
- Warm and welcoming schools
- The District strongly supports long-term professional development programs such as PWIM and Instructional Intelligence
- Initiatives originating from teachers and administrators are supported by the District.
- Open communication
- Strong relationships with the Aboriginal communities
- Effective partnerships with community agencies

### Promising Practices

District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:

- The widespread use of the Picture Word Induction Model (PWIM)
- Monthly preschool literacy program integrated into classrooms
- Themed family reading nights/Bedtime and books
- First Nations Reading Intervention Program
- Parents Helping Parents presentations

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### Recommendations

The team respectfully suggests the District consider:

- Consistently addressing the Questions under each of the 10 Points of Inquiry to facilitate the planning and implementation process with a particular focus on data literacy.
- Incorporating the goals of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement into the Accountability Contract and School Improvement Plans.
- Disaggregating the data for Aboriginal students in order to explicitly develop strategies to meet their unique learning needs.
- Exploring a District Early Intervention (K-1) initiative.
- Continuing to explore strategies and structures to engage parents at the district level.