

District Review Report
School District No. 62 (Sooke)

November 4 - 7, 2007

Submitted to the Minister of Education



District Review Report 2007

District:	62 (Sooke)
Superintendent:	Brian Fox
Date of Visit:	November 4-7, 2007
Team Chair:	Rod Allen, Superintendent, SD 49 Bulkley Valley
Team Members:	Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education Margaret Lipke, Parent, SD 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin) Michael Kee, Vice Principal, SD 44 (North Vancouver) Sandra Lynxleg, Principal, SD 22 (Vernon) Wendy Hyer, Assistant Superintendent, SD 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)

Context

School District No. 62 (Sooke), serving approximately 8,786 students, is located on southern Vancouver Island. Communities of the School District include Sooke, Port Renfrew, Metchosin, Langford, Colwood and the Highlands. Because of proposed development in the district, it is anticipated that the district will grow by 1,000 students by 2013.

Twenty-five percent of residences are rural. Average income and the percentage of adults with secondary and post-secondary education are comparable to those of the province. The percentage of single parent families in the District's two main catchment areas range from close to the provincial average to double the provincial average.

The District has 19 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, 2 secondary schools, 2 alternate schools and a continuing education centre that accommodates adults and secondary students. School sizes range from 16 to 1,400 students. The District reopened Happy Valley Elementary in January 2007. As well, John Stubbs Elementary/Middle School (K-9) will open September 2008, and a new secondary school in the Westshore area in 2009/10.

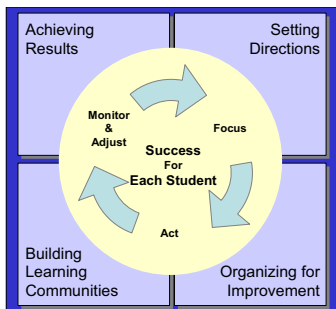
The Purpose of District Reviews

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 Observations 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 November 4, 2007.

Present for the meetings were:

Brian Fox, Superintendent
Jim Cambridge, Assistant Superintendent
Dave Lockyer, Secretary-Treasurer
Pam Richmond, District Principal, Aboriginal Education
Frances Krusekof, District Vice-Principal, Staff Development
Doug Agar, Vice-Principal, Student Support Services
Jeannie Markowsky, District Principal-Student Support Services
Curriculum Team Advisors

2. Met with representative groups including:

Board of Trustees
District Principals and Vice-Principals
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Sooke Teachers' Association
District Parent Advisory Council
Aboriginal Education

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

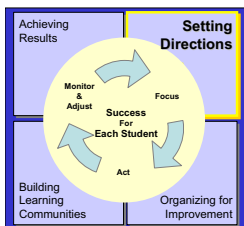
Ecole Poirier Elementary
Glenlake Elementary
John Stubbs Memorial Elementary
Ruth King Elementary
Millstream Elementary
Savory Elementary

Dunsmuir Middle School
Journey Middle School

Belmont Secondary School
Edward Milne Community School
Pacific Secondary School

Westshore Centre for Learning and Training / Juan de Fuca DL

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.

Observation

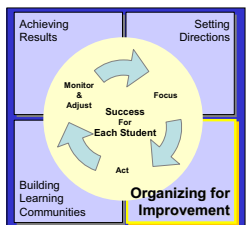
- The Accountability Contract does not function as a road map to inform achievement efforts. As a result, the district focus related to improving student success is not clear.
- The district is aware that a focus on student transitions is required.
- The district is committed to producing an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement and has made progress.
- Schools use a variety of evidence (classroom, school, and district) to inform their work.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Build universal commitment to the work to improve success for each student across the district.
- Establish, articulate and communicate directions, priorities and goals to guide the district:
 - Engage in open dialogue regarding current student results.
 - Collaborate to identify strengths and weaknesses.
 - Set directions.
 - Support classroom practice to achieve improved results.
- Support schools in the development and implementation of transition plans for all students as they enter school, move from elementary to middle, middle to secondary, and secondary to beyond.

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

- The actions of the District Office are not well understood by schools.
 - The lack of strategic direction interferes with the coherence and alignment required for sustained systematic improvement.
- Discussion during the Review visit revealed the value of the full-time District Principal of Aboriginal Education's role, as well as the school-based support workers and teachers.
- The focus, direction and structure of the Alternate Programs has led to improved success for students.
- The District provides a wide variety of program options for students (such as Cosmetology).
- School staffs appreciate staff development opportunities provided by the District.

Recommendations

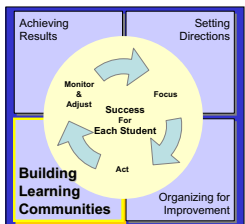
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Ensure that District initiatives and/or actions are clearly understood at all levels, and are aligned to support improved success for all learners.
- Support the District Principal of Aboriginal Education in enhancing the awareness of, and necessity for an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.
- Differentiate resources in a transparent manner, based on the needs of students at each school.

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- Enhance capacity for improvement by building on the expertise and good work at the schools:
 - Connect K-12 educators, particularly at transitions.
 - Connect teachers who teach the same subject or the same grades.
- Monitor and evaluate strategies for effectiveness.

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

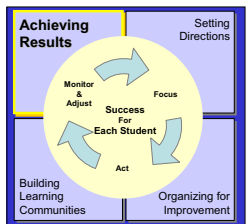
- The Team heard concerns from all partner groups about the lack of:
 - Collaborative decision-making.
 - Effective communication.
 - Positive relationships.
 - Transparency in the District.
- Parents are actively involved in their schools and would appreciate more involvement at the District level.
- The Team acknowledges the hard work and progress made to build the relationships required to complete an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Ensure that there is direct communication to all stakeholders, partner groups and community, and that input is actively sought and valued.
- Develop collaborative relationships amongst all partner groups focusing on student success.
- Build and sustain a culture of collaborative inquiry, focused on continuous improvement for each child.
- Implement a decision-making process that is collaborative, inclusive and clearly understood.

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

- Improved results for Alternate Programs were evident.
- Improved trend lines at several schools were noted.
- Some school staffs are collaborating, monitoring results, and adjusting instructional practice to better support student learning.
- The District does not link participation rates and performance.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Improve transition and completion rates.
- Improve success for Aboriginal learners at all levels.
- Monitor efforts at all schools to improve success for each student.
 - Examine actions when success does not improve.
 - Adjust actions and plans to ensure improvement takes place.
- Complete the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement to support Aboriginal success.
 - Ensure that school and district plans reflect the goals in the Enhancement Agreement.
 - Monitor, system-wide, transition numbers of Aboriginal students particularly at Grade 10 and graduation.
- Build capacity in the use of assessment.
 - To inform decision-making throughout the organization.

- To guide instruction for each learner.
- Assess all District actions for effectiveness in achieving results for students on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

During the course of the review visit the Team consistently heard concerns about the lack of communication, clarity of direction and transparency in decision-making. All partner groups expressed a desire to move towards a more collaborative approach to problem-solving and decision-making in the district, to support success for each student. This desire to work more collaboratively was also evident in meetings with the representatives at each of the 12 schools visited.

With commitment to clarify direction and work collaboratively on continuous improvement, the Review Team is optimistic that the District has the capacity to enhance success for all students.

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. 62 (Sooke).

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.