

Saanich District Review 2002
Final Report- December 18, 2002

District Name:	Saanich	
District Number:	#63	
Superintendent:	Mike McKay	
Date of Visit:	Dec 1 – 4, 2002	
Team Chair:	Jacquie Taylor	
Team members:	Anita Chapman Reggi Balabanov Judy Halbert	Jim Callaghan Dawn Minty Heather Walker

Summary of Process

The Saanich School District Review is the first of three reviews being conducted by the Ministry of Education to field test the new district review model as part of the Accountability Framework transition year.

The purpose of the review is to bring an informed, objective, external perspective to the student achievement work of the school district by:

- Reviewing district and school achievement data;
- Reviewing the district accountability contracts and school plans to improve student achievement'
- Determining the capacity of the district to support schools in improving student achievement
- Making recommendations to the Board and to the Minister about improving student achievement; and
- Identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

For this initial review, Saanich School District and the district review team had two objectives:

- To review the district's focus on student achievement as outlined in their accountability contract and school plans.
- To reflect on the review process and provide advice to the Ministry of Education about the strengths and weaknesses of the initial district review

The District Review Team is extremely appreciative of the courage and leadership the district has demonstrated in this field study. The District Review Team was welcomed warmly, and felt that the district had participated whole-heartedly in the review.

During the visit to Saanich School District, the team visited the following schools for two and a half hour meetings with the principal and vice principal, teacher representatives, parent representatives from the school PAC, and support staff and students in some schools:

- Beaver Lake Elementary School
- Saanichton Elementary School
- Lochside Elementary School

- Greenglade Elementary School
- Deep Cove Elementary School
- Bayside Middle School
- Royal Oak Middle School
- North Saanich Middle School
- Parkland Secondary School
- Claremont Secondary School
- Stelly's Secondary School
- Broadmead Storefront School

The focus of these meetings was to review the school plans for improving student achievement in the context of the district accountability contract.

The team had meetings with:

- Representatives of the district partner groups including the Saanich Teachers' Association, the Saanich Administrators' Association, the Board of School Trustees, the Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils of Saanich, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and Saanich First Nations
- The executive of the Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils of Saanich
- The Board of School Trustees
- The senior executive staff and the instructional leadership team

In addition to the school visits and the meetings listed above, the team considered:

- school data from Ministry, district and school sources
- satisfaction results from Ministry, district and school surveys
- the district accountability contract
- school improvement plans
- the district planning cycle
- the framework for professional growth; and
- the Local Educational Agreement

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

The team offers the following observations:

1. *Goals:* Clarity and relevance of goals in accountability contract and school plans

- The well-established instructional focus in Saanich provides a foundation for developing clear goals focused on improving student learning.
- There is a clear linkage between school goals, level priorities, and district goals with school level goals being fewer and more specific.
- The process of developing school goals and level priorities is generally well understood and broadly accepted by school personnel and parents.

2. *Rationale:* Rationale for selection of goals, and attention paid to specific groups of students
 - In most cases, the school community can articulate the rationale for the school improvement goals. In some cases the rationale included community expectations as well as a data based rationale.
 - There was evidence of genuine commitment to and awareness of school goals. There was less evidence of understanding and knowledge about the goals outlined in the Accountability Agreement.
 - Although there is a data based rationale for the Accountability Agreement goals, it is unclear the extent to which community expectations were a factor in determining these goals.
 - The district has acknowledged the need to address the achievement of its First Nations' learners.

3. *Data:* Use of data in selection of goals and for tracking progress
 - Schools generally understand the importance of using student achievement data to determine the extent to which they are meeting their goals.
 - The team acknowledges the thoughtful use of survey data, both school, district and provincial surveys.
 - Many schools recognize the need to expand their use of student achievement data to track their progress.

4. *Strategies:* Strategies used to achieve goals
 - The district and many schools have identified a number of strategies related to their goals.
 - The district has a history of a strong focus on instructional strategies.
 - In a number of schools, the team was unable to determine a clear coherence between strategies and desired results.

5. *Structures:* Structures shifted to achieve results
 - The district is making genuine efforts to allocate resources to support goals and schools recognize and appreciate these efforts.
 - In a number of schools there are innovative approaches to changing structures to support student learning.

6. *Results:* Results are monitored
 - Most schools are at the beginning stages of developing focused improvement plans and need to develop the routine practice of examining results on an on-going basis.
 - The team recognizes that in most schools this is a relatively new practice and encourages schools to collect and use student performance data from multiple sources on an on-going basis.

7. *Communication:* Results are communicated with the broad community
 - Most schools have well established mechanisms for communicating with parents.
 - Some schools are developing innovative ways of sharing student results with parents.
 - With the increased emphasis on improving student achievement, both the district and schools need to continue to find ways to communicate student results routinely and consistently.

8. *Partnership – District and School Coherence*
 - There is a clear connection between school plans, level priorities and the district Accountability Agreement.
 - District and school plans and initiatives are clearly aligned.
 - The team especially notes the strong support for shared initiatives.

9. *Partnership – District and Parent Involvement*
 - The process for developing and implementing school planning councils has been thoughtful and inclusive.
 - As schools and the district continue to develop and refine annual plans for improving student achievement, there will need to be continued effort to involve parents in all aspects of the development of the plan.
 - There are strong, positive relationships between parents, school personnel and district staff. This strong basis will serve schools and the district well in the future.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork: Clear vision and commitment*
 - Strong school and district leadership is a feature of this district. Leadership is appreciated and acknowledged by all members of the school community.

Strengths

Saanich is a school district with many strengths. In particular, the team notes the following:

1. *District Culture - “The Saanich Way”:*

Clear evidence of:

- District vision for improvement
- Shared leadership
- Attention to capacity building
- Climate of trust, respect and inclusiveness
- Strong middle school collaboration

2. *Capacity Building:*

Clear evidence of:

- District wide professional development
- School district leaders model a focus on student achievement
- History of improving instructional practices

3. *Decision-making:*

Clear evidence of:

- Balance between school autonomy and district direction
- School plans are linked through level priorities
- Decision making is centered on student needs

4. *Use of Surveys:*

Clear evidence of:

- Longitudinal history of survey data
- Multiple surveying (eg exit, primary, provincial, grad)
- Questions that address difficult issues

Promising Practices

The team recognizes the following practices in Saanich that could provide models for other districts:

- The integrated, highly collaborative model for professional growth
- The development of level priorities (eg Elementary, Middle, Secondary)
- Philosophy and practice of middle schools
- The development of longitudinal data from satisfaction and perception surveys

Recommendations

1. Improve the quality of student achievement data.

The team believes that the district has identified a sufficient number of data sources and that the focus on using student achievement data to inform decision-making will be strengthened by:

- Including confidence intervals and participation rates where available in all reports
- Disaggregating school and district level student achievement data for groups of students that are targeted in school and district goals, e.g. First Nations, boys, Special Needs and ESL students
- Identifying the most reliable, valid and useful classroom based data sources.

2. Build capacity in assessment literacy.

The team notes the history of support for strong instructional practices and recommends that the district build on this solid base to increase the focus on developing strength in assessment literacy. The team believes that the education community can benefit greatly from an increased ability to examine student achievement data for patterns and to make changes in practice based on that information. Specifically the team recommends that:

- The district lift out the embedded goal for First Nations learners when analyzing and interpreting data and monitoring progress. The team recognizes and agrees with the rationale for embedding the goal and strategies for improving the achievement of First Nations students; however, the team feels that a discrete focus on First Nations' achievement data will be necessary at some stages in the process.
- The district develop a focused plan to increase the capacity of the school community to identify student achievement data sources, analyze and interpret data, and use data to adjust instruction, allocate resources and adapt structures, and monitor progress over time. The team believes that the rationale for goal selection is stronger when there is a consideration of both student achievement data and community needs.
- Future accountability contracts include specific information on progress in key goal areas from the previous contract. In order for parents and the community to understand the process over time, the accountability contract should include a description of any adjustments to goals and strategies that have been made as a result of their analysis and monitoring of student achievement data.

3. Increase parent involvement in using student achievement data in planning.

The team notes that parents feel involved and included in school planning. With the increased emphasis on planning for improved student achievement, the team recommends that:

- The district implement a clear mechanism for parent involvement in the development of the district accountability agreement. This would have the added benefit of serving as a model for school planning councils.
- The district develop a communication plan to inform staff and parents about the ways the district is using student achievement data to inform its planning and decision-making. This would include reporting on decisions, initiatives, and strategies as well as progress related to improving student achievement.

4. Increase the focus on continuous improvement by setting goals to enhance the learning of high achieving students.

The team notes that student achievement data indicate overall high levels of performance. The team also notes that plans are in place to address the needs of groups of students, e.g., First Nations with significantly lower levels of achievement. The team recommends that the district and schools strive to enhance the learning of those students already 'meeting expectations' by setting a "stretch" goal in an area of strength.

Follow Up

The team recommends that the Ministry of Education provide the Saanich School District with information about revisions to the district review process based on the district's participation in field-testing the review process.

The team encourages the Saanich School District to continue its efforts to provide an excellent learning environment for all its learners.