

District Review Report
School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha)
April 6 - 10, 2008

Submitted to the Ministry of Education



District Review Report 2008

District: 67 (Okanagan Skaha)

Superintendent: Gary Doi, Superintendent

Date of Visit: April 7 -10, 2008

Team Chair: Gary Graf, Retired Superintendent

Team Members: Tanis Carlow, Partnership and Planning, Ministry of Education
Charles Coleman, Principal, SD 79 (Cowichan Valley)
Kimberlee Howland, Parent, SD 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith)
Glenn Rowan, System Performance, Ministry of Education
Ross Spina, Assistant Superintendent, SD 73
(Kamloops/Thompson)
Jeff Stewart, Principal, SD 71 (Comox Valley)
Lori Tresierra-Durocher, Teacher, SD 28 (Quesnel)
Afton Wright, Manager, System Performance, Ministry of Education

Context

School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) comprises 7,076 students in 19 schools incorporating the communities of Penticton, Summerland, Naramata and Kaleden. The District's enrolment is declining slightly each year. The senior population (65+) in the community is almost double the provincial average. There are 610 Aboriginal students in the District with students representing status on-reserve First Nations, other First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and other off-reserve people of Aboriginal ancestry. A full-day Aboriginal Kindergarten program has been in operation in the District for nine years.

The District offers a range of educational choices, programs, services and facilities and a variety of learning opportunities for students. The District infrastructure for technology is highly developed and is centered on a fibre-optic network. The ratio of students to computers is approximately three to one.

The District was reconfigured to a K-5 elementary, Grade 6 to 8 middle school and Grade 9 to 12 secondary school system. The largest secondary school, Penticton Secondary, is presently being rebuilt with a budget of \$39.4 million. This is to be opened in September 2009.

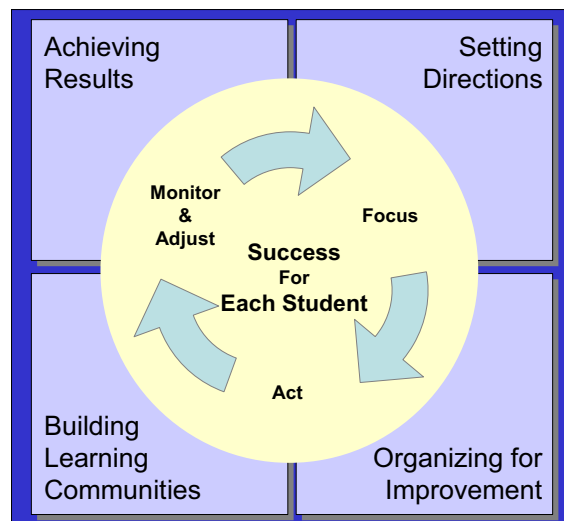
The Purpose of District Review

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:

1. What is most important? – Focus
2. What are we doing about it? – Act
3. 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 document intended to assist the District in 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 April 6, 7 and 10. Present for the meetings were:

Gary Doi, Superintendent
Frank Regehr, Secretary-Treasurer
Brian Celli, Director of Instruction
Garth Schafer, Director of Instruction
Dave Burgoyne, Director of Instruction
Lynn Hauptman, Director of Instruction

2. Met with representatives of groups including:

The Board of Education
Okanagan Skaha Teachers Union
Principals
CUPE Executive
Aboriginal Education Advisory Council
District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)
District Helping Teachers
Penticton Indian Band Council

3. Met with school staff, students and parents at the following schools:

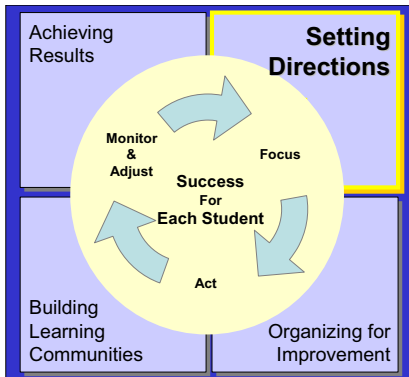
Carmi Elementary
Giant's Head Elementary
Kaleden Elementary
Naramata Elementary
Queens Park Elementary
Uplands Elementary
West Bench Elementary
Wiltse Elementary

Distributed Learning/Home Learners

KVR Middle School
McNicoll Park Middle School
Skaha Lake Middle School
Summerland Middle School

Penticton Secondary
Princess Margaret Secondary
Summerland Secondary

Setting Directions:



Expectations:

Continuously improving districts set directions that enhance success for each child. District priorities are identified through thorough examination of evidence from classroom, school, and district level sources. The focus on continuous improvement is evident in goals, objectives and related rationale. Goals and objectives are systematically reviewed and revised.

Observations

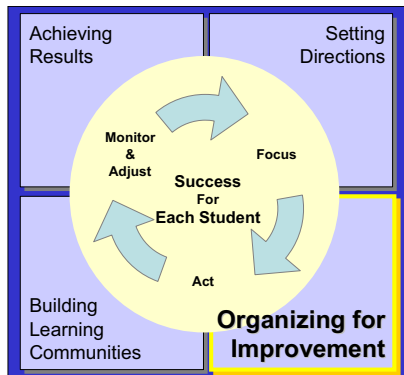
- The District has a clear vision addressing the achievement of each learner.
 - Ownership of the vision and core values is evident across the District.
 - District and school plans are aligned.
- The Literacy goal is well established and supported.
 - The Numeracy goal is in its formative stages and is developing momentum.
 - The Social Responsibility goal has been refocused and refined to address school completion and transition.
- Partner groups are committed to action based on thoughtful assessment practices.
- Continuous improvement is centered on clarity of purpose and alignment of action, using a variety of approaches that:
 - Build professional capacity of all stakeholders.
 - Demonstrate shared leadership.
 - Nurture sustainable practices.
 - Foster shared responsibility for results.
 - Support school based decision-making.
- The goals and priorities set out in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement are not universally understood.
- The process followed to develop district plans is not clearly understood.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Recognize and celebrate the processes used to develop the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (EA) and promote the understanding that the EA is intended to support Aboriginal student success in district and school plans.
- Communicate the connections between the EA and the district and school plans to broaden the understanding of the expectations set out in the EA.
- Clarify the process for the development of the District Achievement Contract.
 - Communicate the process to all partner groups.
 - Articulate the process in the Achievement Contract.

Organizing for Improvement:



Expectations:

Continuously improving districts organize actions 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. Actions selected to achieve goals are a blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking. These actions also include effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The district connects staff and schools to build capacity. Actions are monitored and adjusted for effectiveness.

Observations

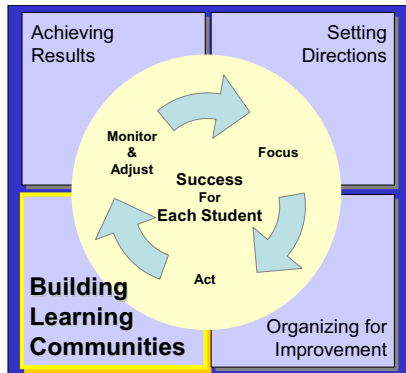
- There is a shared understanding that the classroom is the focus of change.
 - Significant support exists for ongoing teacher development to enhance instructional practices.
 - The district and schools are committed to the use of best practices, action research and experts to improve teaching and learning.
- Collaborative and strategic processes are in place to determine priorities and allocate resources to improve the achievement of each learner.
- Innovation in technology is used to support new programs and instruction.
- Many learning opportunities are available for students, staff, parents and the community.
- The District continues to examine ways to support a growing number of students with special needs.
- Many unique structures such as demonstration classes and learning rounds exist to develop common understandings and to share effective practices.
- Interest in differentiated instruction is evident throughout the district.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Support skill development in differentiating instruction.
- Balance the need to implement innovative strategies with the time needed to reflect, to assess strategies for effectiveness, and to consolidate practices.

Building Learning Communities:



Expectations:

In continuously improving districts there is a shared vision for and a 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. Ongoing parent involvement is embedded in district culture. The district makes public their plans and progress. They collaborate and communicate in multiple ways about their work. Input and dialogue is actively sought and valued district-wide.

Observations

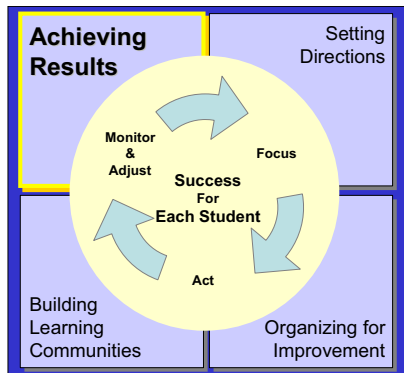
- Focused efforts to build capacity for shared leadership are evident at all levels of the district.
- There is support to schools to implement many approaches, for example, flex funds, site-based special education resources, district staff development opportunities and the annual Leadership Conference.
- Quality relationships exist at all levels.
 - Trust and optimism are modeled throughout the district.
 - Positive relationship exists with the Aboriginal communities.
- Open and transparent dialogue among partner groups is valued and respected and is part of planning and decision making.
- Decisions made by the District and its schools regarding the assignment of key personnel are effective in enhancing collaboration to maintain a focus on student achievement.
- A need to enhance and increase opportunities for communications between parents, Parent Advisory Councils and the District Parent Advisory Council was noted.
- Teachers in small schools expressed the need to have further dialogue with same grade teachers in other schools regarding instructional strategies.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Facilitate and enhance communication between parents and parent groups.
- Expand small school connections and opportunities for professional dialogue across the district.

Achieving Results:



Expectations:

Improving districts continuously improve results. They monitor progress and make adjustments in key areas of their work to improve results over time – for individual students, groups of students, schools and the district.

Observations

- Many areas of academic achievement show strong results over time:
 - Graduation rates have been consistently high.
 - Most provincial measures show results at or above the provincial averages.
- District and classroom assessment practices are used thoughtfully and responsively to monitor and adjust instructional practices and to inform planning processes.
- Performance standards-based measurement tools are being used across the district as part of an overall assessment cycle that is regularly reviewed and refined.
- Schools and the District are to be commended for the identification of students who are at-risk and provision of interventions intended to enable higher achievement, for example, Hot House, Sister Circles and the Step Up Program.
- Processes are in place to disaggregate student achievement results. These processes support customized and personalized approaches to instruction.
- Disaggregation and analysis of Aboriginal student achievement results are at the initial stages.
- Since the last District Review, the tools, targets, and baselines have continued to change, making it difficult to determine trends over time.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts to:

- Determine consistent and measurable indicators that the District can use to monitor trends in student achievement over time.
- Improve the success of Aboriginal students by focusing on the goals and targets outlined in the Enhancement Agreement and acting on the strategies identified.

Conclusion

The District is a progressive, fiscally responsible, well-managed and performance-oriented school district. Trustees, District and school-based staff are to be commended for their unity of purpose in addressing the success of individual students. Their commitment to continuous learning and building positive relationships is based upon trust and mutual respect. There is also a strong commitment to well-researched practices that enhance teaching and learning.

The District is well on its way to establishing a strong culture that values learning, teaching, shared leadership, ownership and responsibility for student learning at all levels.

School District No. 67 is a striving district. The challenge ahead is to maintain and sustain this positive and energetic learning community. The Team acknowledges and agrees with the District and its schools that there is more to be done to address the needs of each student.

The Team believes that the District has the capacity and commitment to improve student achievement.

Response to the Review

The District will respond annually to the Recommendations in the report within its Achievement Contracts. For further information regarding the District response to this report, please contact School District No. 67.

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 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.