

District Review Report
Final

School District No. 82 (Coast Mountain)

April 7 – April 9, 2003

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair

Des Sjoquist, Superintendent, School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)

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District Name: Coast Mountain

District Number: 82

Superintendent: Randy Smalbrugge

Date of Visit: April 6-9, 2003

Team Chair: Des Sjoquist – Superintendent, SD No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)

Team Members:

Claudia Roch – Director, Student Achievement, Ministry of Education

Terri-Lynne Huddleston – Parent, BCCPAC

Heather Morin – Education Officer, Aboriginal Enhancements Branch, Ministry of Education

David Nickoli, Principal, SD No. 64 (Gulf Islands)

Lyn Daniels, Aboriginal Education Consultant, Vancouver School Board

Leanna Garner, Principal, SD No. 28 (Quesnel)

Libby Hart, SD Administrator Aboriginal Education, SD No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)

Bev Craig, Teacher, SD No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)

Summary of Process

The Coast Mountain School District is one of twenty school district reviews being undertaken in the 2002/03 school year.

The purpose of the school 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 by:

- reviewing district and school achievement data;
- reviewing the district accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement; achievement; and
- identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their effort
- making recommendations to the board and to the Minister about improving student efforts to improve student achievement.

In addressing the above purposes, the District Review Team reviewed the District Accountability Contract, individual school plans, Ministry data related to the school district and materials provided by the district.

As an introduction to the school district, the District Review Team met informally with representatives of various partner groups including: the Superintendent of Schools, Acting Assistant Superintendent; Secretary-Treasurer; Director of Instruction; Acting President of the local District Parents' Advisory Council; District Principal of the First Nations Education Centre;

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Education Coordinators from the Kitsumkalum, Kitselas and Gitanmaax Band Councils; and a representative from the Kitamaat Village Council Education Portfolio. This was followed by a meeting with the Senior Management staff, Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent, and Director of Student Services.

The Team traveled to seventeen schools and met with the principals, vice principals, teachers, parents, support workers, and students. The meeting with Bear Valley School was conducted through a conference call.

Bear Valley (conference call)	Caledonia Sr. Secondary
Clarence Michiel Elementary	Cassie Hall Elementary
E.T. Kenney Primary	Hazelton Secondary
John Field Elementary	Kildala Elementary
Kitwanga Elementary	Mount Elizabeth Secondary
Nechako Elementary	New Hazelton Elementary
Skeena Junior Secondary	South Hazelton Elementary
Thornhill Elementary	Thornhill Primary
Uplands Elementary	Parkside Alternate School

The Team also met with the staff at the Native Education Centre and three representatives of the Terrace/Thornhill Parents for Music Society.

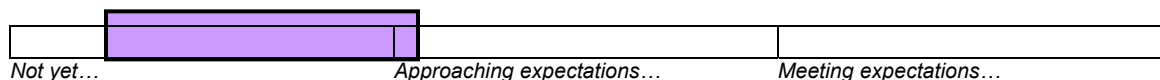
The chair of the Team met with the Superintendent of Schools to review the preliminary findings. Four members of the Team, including the Chair, met with the Superintendent of Schools, Secretary Treasurer and the Director of Student Services to review the draft report.

The Team would like to acknowledge the warm reception and cooperation provided by the senior management team, school and district staff, parents, representatives of the Aboriginal communities and students.

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. Goals:

Improving districts have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in clear goals for improving student learning.



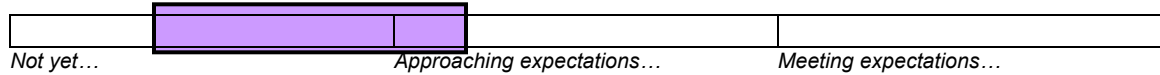
- The district has articulated four goals that are linked to student learning. The broad nature of these goals does not provide specific focus and direction to guide the district's efforts in enhancing student achievement.
- Several schools are showing promise in developing clear goals that are focused on student achievement in their schools.
- The evidence supports the need to more specifically address Aboriginal student achievement within the districts goals.

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2. **Rationale:**

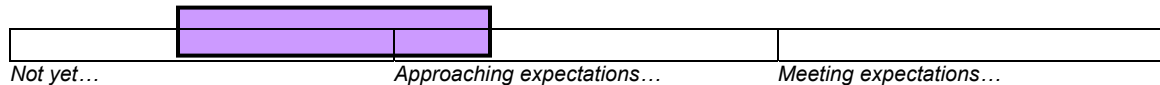
Improving districts have a thorough and connected set of reasons based on evidence for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The district has provided a rationale for each of the district goals however, the rationale do not consistently reflect a thorough analysis of the evidence available to the district.
- Several schools have established clear connections between “what they are doing and why they are doing it.” In some cases the analysis of the evidence has led to focused goals and/or specific efforts to address Aboriginal student achievement.

3. **Data:**

Improving districts are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school and district / provincial data. The analysis of this evidence has informed the selection of the district goals.



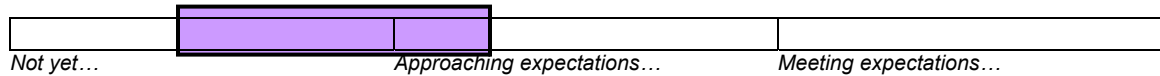
- There are varied and different sources of data available throughout the district but there is no evidence of coordinated and sustained processes to compile, analyze and use the information to guide district decisions and practices.
- The District Accountability Contract does not yet reflect an analysis of the performance of specific groups of students for example: Aboriginal, male, and female.
- The Team saw evidence of promising *practices* in the appropriate and effective use of data in many schools and classrooms.
- Most schools described the need for direction and support to enhance their skills in gathering, analyzing and using data to monitor student performance.

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4. **Strategies:**

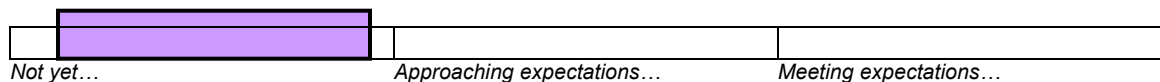
Improving districts have a well-organized, focused improvement plan in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



- The District Accountability Contract identifies strategies, however implementation of these was not consistently evident throughout the schools.
- Specific strategies to support the success of Aboriginal students are limited in the District Accountability Contract and school plans.
- The schools described that in the past, the district introduced a number of initiatives that have not been consistently sustained over time.
- In school visits the Team saw considerable evidence of focused strategies, notably in the areas of literacy and social responsibility. Some of these strategies have been sustained over time and they are championed in the schools.
- There is minimal evidence of sharing *promising practices* across the school district and its communities.

5. **Structures:**

Improving districts have aligned structures – resources, time, organizations – to get the results they want. This includes effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.

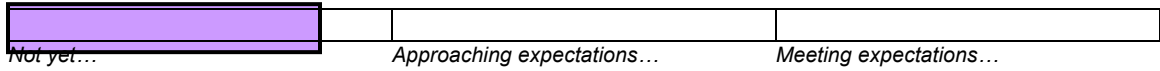


- The school district described several recent structural changes, some of which have been introduced to enhance student achievement however, most the structural changes the Team observed were financially driven.
- The Team was unable to determine the degree to which the district is monitoring the effects of structural changes on the attainment of achievement goals.

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6. **Results:**

Improving districts get improved student learning results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- The Accountability Contract does not yet include baseline data that describe current student performance in goal areas and does not yet indicate how trend data will be gathered and utilized to systematically guide decisions over time.
- In a number of schools and classrooms there is evidence of progress in establishing baseline data, particularly in areas of literacy and social responsibility and some evidence that performance trends are being systematically monitored.
- Some schools described that they would welcome guidance and support as they work to establish consistent expectations, measures and strategies for tracking results.

7. **Communication:**

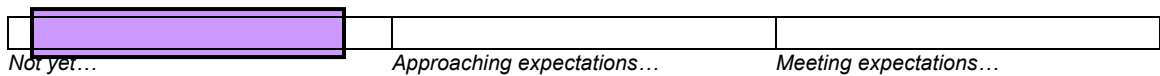
Improving districts communicate and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made.



- On the school visits the Team found a general familiarity with the Accountability Contract. The Team observed that there was no apparent routine and consistent communication with partner groups about the goals, and the progress being made.
- Many schools provide information regarding goals and student performance to their school communities.

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

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



- The Team observed limited alignment between school district goals and school plans.

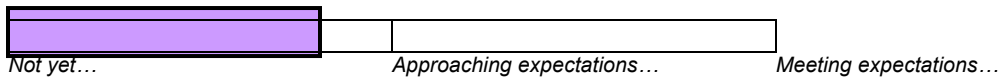
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- There does not appear to be a strategy to align school district and school plans.

9. **Teamwork: District and Parent Involvement**

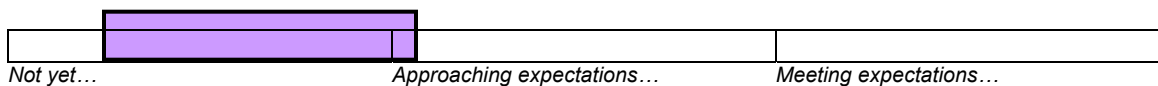
Improving districts work as a Team with parents, including specific groups of parents, on improving student learning.



- The involvement of parents in establishing the District Accountability Contract was not evident.
- It was evident to the Team that there has been little engagement of Aboriginal parents and Aboriginal communities in district planning and goal setting.
- It is evident to the Team that Parent Advisory Councils have strong involvement in the schools and that parents are supportive of school goals. Many parents assist with literacy initiatives at home and in school.
- In some schools parents are active participants in preparing goals for the School Planning Councils. While the School Planning Council is a new concept, parents appear eager to be more involved in school planning.

10. **Leadership / Teamwork:**

Improving districts are led by district leaders with a clear vision for and commitment to school improvement and improving student achievement. Principals, vice principals, teacher, parent and student leadership is encouraged and systematically developed – with a focus on improving student learning.



- It appears that the district is struggling to establish and communicate a common district vision of student achievement.
- There is evidence of leadership at the school level and a wide array of expertise in the local communities
- A large number of staff that are engaged in formal and informal studies developing skills directly linked to the district goals. An opportunity exists to embrace the potential of this growing district capacity.

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Strengths

- Educators who are student focused and passionate about teaching.
- A highly trained staff that demonstrates a commitment to life long learning and continuous improvement of their practices.
- Parents and communities who support their local schools.
- A wealth of existing and potential leadership in all partner groups.
- A sustained commitment to social responsibility through school wide approaches.
- A commitment to establishing partnerships (LEA) with Aboriginal communities to improve success for Status, On-Reserve students.

Promising Practices

Learning Community/Relationships

- Trustee's visits to schools and PAC meetings
- *Board News*
- Elders in the schools
- Home reading programs
- *Connections* – a secondary school support service for students
- Breakfast programs
- Teacher sharing talents with other teachers
- Peer parenting
- Student Advisory Committee to the Principal
- Teacher writing groups
- Math Headstart – 2 week summer program for secondary students

Social Responsibility Projects

- SCAT (Skeena Community Awareness Team) – school based community service
- Virtues project – values program
- Children's Singing CD on Social Responsibility
- Student recognition programs / positive behaviour supports
- Regularly scheduled teacher/student meetings across each grade

Locally Developed Curriculum and Resources

- First Nations Leadership Course
- First Nations Art and Design 9-12
- Haisla Language 8,9,10
- First Nations Studies 8,9,10
- Composition 9 – extra writing support for students
- Gitksan Language and Culture

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Recommendations

Goals:

- The Team recommends fewer and more focused goals to direct the district efforts in enhancing student achievement.
- Consider using the *ten points of inquiry* as a framework for developing, implementing and monitoring the District Accountability Contract and School Growth Plans.
- Provide training and support to schools in the effective development of school growth plans.

Data:

- The Team saw evidence of many sources of data being used in schools. The Team recommends that the district develop a process to collect, analyze and use the information available in schools to guide district decisions and practices.

Strategies:

- Establish a well communicated plan by which district strategies will be identified, implemented, supported, sustained and adjusted.

Structures:

- While the Team was encouraged to see the recent progress in Aboriginal education, the Team identifies a need to coordinate Aboriginal Education programs and services and establish effective dialogue with the Aboriginal communities across the district.

Teamwork:

- Parents could be more involved in reviewing district goals and the district could provide more opportunities for the District Parent Advisory Council to be involved as a more active partner in education.
- Greater effort should be made for the district to include Aboriginal parents in district planning and goal setting.
- The Team saw evidence of effective working relationships at the school level. We found evidence of ineffective relationships between various partner groups and the school district. The Team recommends that the district develop a plan to foster positive relationships within the school district and with all partner groups.

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Leadership:

- The district has identified the “principal as leader” as a strategy for advancing student achievement. The Team recommends that the district continue to provide opportunities to embrace the vast leadership talents within the partner groups.

Priorities

- **Take steps to move student achievement to the forefront of the district’s priorities.**
- **Develop structures to facilitate on-going dialogue between all partners: school board, district staff, schools, parents, students and Aboriginal communities.**
- **Address the perceived issues regarding amalgamation and work to create a unified district culture.**