

District Review Report

School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

April 25 - 27, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Ron Allen, Superintendent School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)

**District Review Report
2004/2005**

District Name:	North Okanagan-Shuswap
District Number:	83
Superintendent:	Doug Pearson
Date of Visit:	April 25 - 27, 2005
Team Chair:	Ron Allen, Superintendent, SD 05 (Southeast Kootenay)
Team Members:	Reggi Balabanov, Parent, SD 36 (Surrey) Kathleen Bedard, District Principal, SD 08 (Kootenay Lake) Keven Elder, Assistant Superintendent, SD 63 (Saanich) Janet Grant, Principal, SD 40 (New Westminster) Brenda Leimert, Principal, SD 23 (Central Okanagan) Eric McMahon, Coordinator Aboriginal Enhancements, Ministry of Education Michael Strukoff, District Principal, SD 51 (Boundary) Terry Taylor, Teacher SD 10 (Arrow Lakes)

Context

North Okanagan-Shuswap School District No. 83 is an area of 8,500 square kilometres located around the Shuswap Lake and North Okanagan. The School District encompasses the distinct communities of Malakwa, Sicamous, Grindrod, Enderby, Ashton Creek, Kingfisher, Armstrong, Spallumcheen, Falkland, Rancho/Deep Creek, Silver Creek, Salmon Arm, Carlin/Tappen, Sorrento, Celista, and Seymour Arm.

The School District includes four First Nations bands: Adams Lake Indian Band; Shuswap Indian Band; Neskonlith Indian Band; and, Spallumcheen Indian Band. Comprehensive local education agreements and strong ties have been developed with the Aboriginal communities, resulting in both academic and cultural benefits. The School District has 21 community elementary schools, 3 secondary schools (Grade 8-12), 1 senior secondary school (Grade 11-12) and 2 junior secondaries (Grade 8-10). There are also three storefront schools and one continuing education centre.

The School District currently employs approximately 1,100 staff and has an operating budget of approximately \$58,000,000.

Within the District, 10.8% of the student population are of Aboriginal descent. The District is currently engaged in the development of an Enhancement Agreement with their Aboriginal communities.

The District serves a student population of 7,500 students and during recent years it has faced continued declining enrolment. Like many rural districts in the province, the District has closed three schools due to declining enrolment. Presently the District is moving to a middle school configuration in two of its communities.

District Review Report
2004/2005

Summary of Process

The major 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 schools 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;
- Make recommendations to the school district and to the minister about improving student achievement and;
- Identify promising practices that might assist other school districts and schools in their plans to improve student achievement.

In addressing these objectives, the Review Team examined the District's Accountability Contract, Ministry data related to the district and individual school plans.

On Sunday evening the Team enjoyed a dinner with District staff, trustees, and representatives of the various educational partners: the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC); Aboriginal education staff; students; and, the vice-president of the teachers' association and the president of CUPE. During the evening the Team was provided with an overview of School District No. 83. This included the educational context of the district, areas of strength, the goals of the District Accountability Contract and highlights of a number of district programs and initiatives.

The Team visited all schools in the District and met with School Planning Councils (SPCs) and other additional staff, parents and students as determined by the individual schools. The Team also had an opportunity to visit the Alternate programs in Enderby and Salmon Arm and talk to staff in those programs. In addition, the Team met with representatives of DPAC, the Aboriginal staff/community and district leadership teams.

At the conclusion of the review, the Team provided a verbal report on their observations to District staff, the Board, staff and partner group representatives.

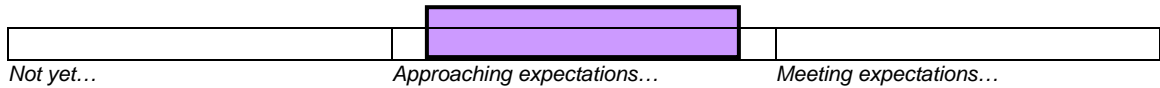
The Team appreciated the warm reception they received throughout the District and wishes to thank everyone they met for their openness, informed dialogue, professionalism and sharing during their visit to the District.

**District Review Report
2004/2005**

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*

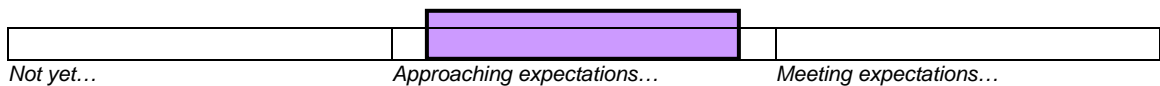
Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



- The District Accountability Growth Plan includes two goals that are based on evidence and focused on student achievement while two others are more accurately described as program implementation goals.
- Many schools have goals that are based on evidence and focused on student achievement. The majority of goals, while related to student achievement, were not strongly supported by student achievement data.
- District goals for Aboriginal students and students with special needs are embedded in the District Accountability Growth Plan as specific objectives.

2. *Rationale:*

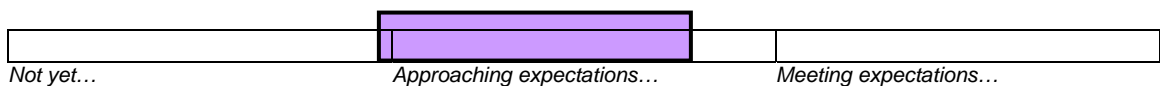
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- Some schools selected goals based on evidence from a variety of data sources.
- While staff members and parents established goals based on thoughtful insights into the needs of children, many goals are not supported by analysis of a range of student achievement data. As a result, connection between school goals and relevant student achievement data is not always evident.
- The District's stated rationale for goal development includes input from School Planning Councils and consideration of a variety of data sources.

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.



- There is a growing awareness and enthusiasm in many schools about the ways in which data can be used to inform planning for improved student achievement.
- Some schools use provincial and school-based achievement data to monitor progress of individual students or cohort groups in support of planning.

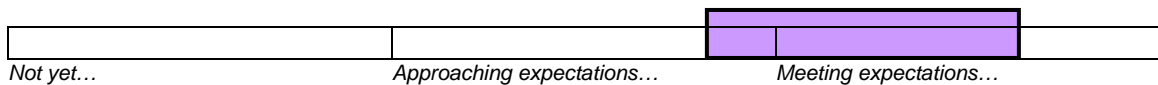
District Review Report

2004/2005

- Many schools face challenges finding and tracking multiple sources of data to inform school planning. The District supports schools by gathering and disseminating data in support of school-level planning.
- The District has identified clear and specific data to support goals for Aboriginal students.

4. *Strategies:*

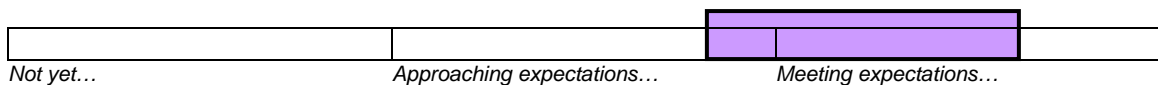
Improving districts and schools have focused, well organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



- A rich array of instructional strategies is clearly evident throughout the District.
- The District provides leadership, training and support. It is evident that schools find this “buffet” of opportunities energizing and supportive of improved practice.
- The team observed professionalism, passion and commitment to implementing innovative strategies throughout the District.
- The District has initiated training for the use of BC Performance Standards and provides support for district-wide and school-wide writes.
- Strategies have been developed and implemented at the district level to support the success of Aboriginal learners.

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.

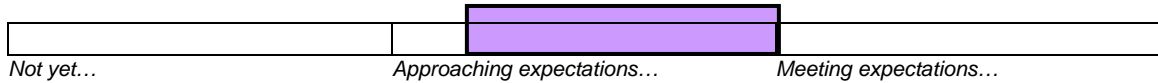


- The District makes a significant commitment to allocate resources in support of the needs of students.
- The District supports flexible allocation of school-based resources, and often differentiates or re-aligns resources based on needs identified by schools and communities.
- The District has developed leadership teams and committees that support collaboration focused on attainment of district and school goals.
- The District’s shared leadership structures are being replicated in schools.
- Additional staffing is provided to support the Aboriginal education, career education, student services and Fine Arts programs.
- Structures have been identified to track FSA participation and achievement levels for students with special needs.

**District Review Report
2004/2005**

6. *Results:*

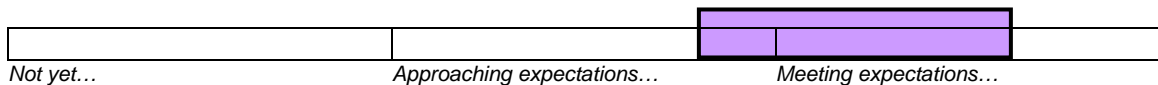
Improving districts and schools monitor and make adjustments to get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- The District and some schools analyze student achievement data, specifically FSA and CAT3 results, and are starting to make adjustments to instructional practice.
- Many schools are developing baselines for performance targets.
- Some schools are beginning to use authentic measures such as the BC Performance Standards.
- The District closely monitors Aboriginal student achievement.

7. *Communication:*

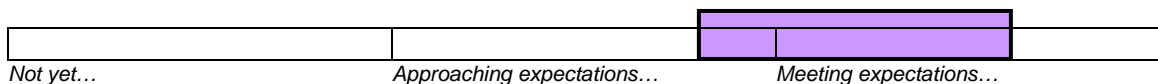
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



- Schools use a variety of strategies to communicate and make public their improvement and the progress being made.
- The District makes a strong effort to communicate effectively with schools and partner groups despite geographic challenges.
- The District and schools have welcoming and caring environments that foster communication.
- Schools are finding ways to enhance communication with parents about efforts to improve student achievement.
- There is strong collaboration between the District and the Aboriginal communities including the four Bands and off-reserve and Metis families. The First Nations Education Council has played a key role in this collaboration.

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.



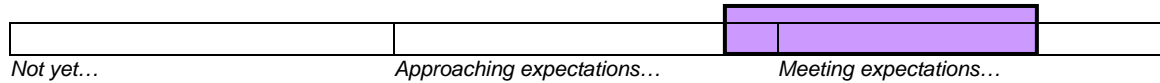
- School Planning Council members report that the fall planning session organized by the District to develop the Accountability Contract was productive and informative, as were the regional sharing sessions with Trustees.
- All schools are knowledgeable about the district goals.
- The district planning process is comprehensive and inclusive of partner groups.
- District Aboriginal goals are not reflected in most school plans.

District Review Report

2004/2005

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement.*

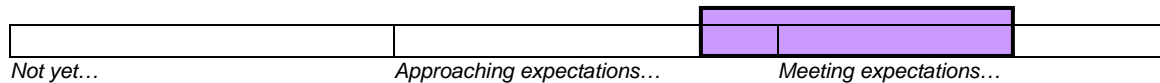
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- There is a very high level of parent involvement in schools and throughout the District.
- Some schools are working to increase levels of parental involvement in a variety of ways in order to enhance student achievement.
- The partnership between the district and the DPAC is a model of exemplary parental involvement.

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.



- Leadership is encouraged and systematically developed across the District.
- The District models shared leadership, collegiality and the importance of positive working relationships.
- The participation and empowerment of teachers on District leadership teams demonstrates shared leadership and a commitment to collaboration.
- Strong student leadership programs are evident throughout the District.

Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement at specific schools.

- The District is characterized by strong, caring, generous and supportive relationships among staff, students, parents, trustees and communities.
- Throughout the District there is significant commitment to professional and staff development. District workshops provide support for staff development related to student achievement goals.
- The District Parent Advisory Council models and advocates for informed parent involvement throughout the District.
- Communication and networking are strengths within the District and between schools and their communities.
- Career programs demonstrate impressive partnership with post-secondary institutions and business.

District Review Report

2004/2005

- The District has strong Aboriginal education programs that support students: academically, socially and culturally. The program increases the awareness of Aboriginal culture throughout the District.
- The District has a commitment to fostering achievement of students with special needs.

Promising Practices

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

- School Planning Councils were brought together for one day to build the District Accountability Contract from school growth plans.
- Schools present school growth plans to area trustees and in the process hear and learn from others.
- The District committee structures for literacy, numeracy, social responsibility, and focus groups (such as gender gap and Beyond Monet) are based on teacher empowerment and distributed leadership.
- The District has successful practices for liaison with Aboriginal communities.
- The District has a range of successful practices for communication.

Recommendations

The Team respectfully recommends that:

- the District provide leadership and guidance to schools regarding the use and analysis of a variety of sources of student achievement data in the development of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-limited) goals and objectives that are linked to specific student achievement targets;
- the District continue to review and analyze the types of data collected to determine the most relevant and authentic assessment strategies and practices;
- the District's professional improvement initiatives be refined to focus on a few key evidence-based targeted improvements for student achievement in all schools; and,
- all schools work collaboratively with the District to support the district goals for Aboriginal education in order to develop shared ownership and a collective vision for the success of Aboriginal learners.