

District Review Report

School District No. 84 (Vancouver Island West)

October 13 - 18, 2007

Submitted to the Minister of Education



District Review Report 2007

District: 84 (Vancouver Island West)

Superintendent: Bruce Jansen

Date of Visit: October 13 – 18, 2007

Team Chair: Bendina Miller, Superintendent SD 6 (Rocky Mountain)

Team Members: Carol Cole, Parent, SD 28 (Quesnel)
Gloria Raphael, Principal, SD 39 (Vancouver)
Judy Arnold, Director, System Performance, Ministry of Education
Kathy Sawchuk, Assistant Superintendent, SD 59 (Peace River South)

Context

Vancouver Island West School District serves approximately 440 students enrolled in the District's five schools. Three of the schools, Kyuquot, Zeballos, and Tahsis, are located in remote rural communities. Travel to these schools from the District Office in Gold River requires a commute by logging road of 1 1/2 hours to Tahsis, 2 1/2 hours to Zeballos, and a 4-hour commute to Kyuquot by logging road and water taxi. The District serves a diverse community which includes a significant First Nations enrolment of approximately 50 percent. Declining enrolment and significant staff turnover have been features of the district for a number of years.

As a result of the recommendations from the last review, the District has actively worked to build relationships with staff and all of the communities. Staff and members of the each community spoke highly of the efforts of the current superintendent to engage everyone. In addition, the District increased resource support at each school to focus on student learning.

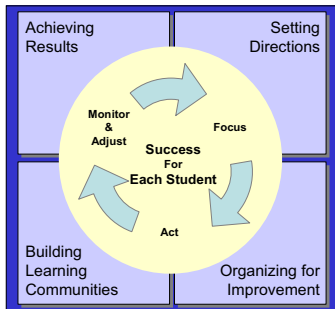
The Purpose of District Reviews

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 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 staff on October 14, 2007.

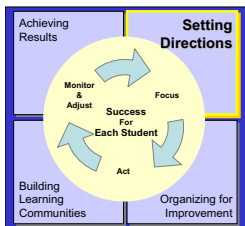
Present for the meetings were:

Bruce Jansen, Superintendent
Roz Latvula, Vice Principal of Aboriginal Education
Steven Larre, Vice Principal of School Based and District Programs
Jim MacPherson, Principal
Tony Ellis, Principal
Arlene Fehr, Principal
Terry Southern, Principal
Jeff Rockwell, Principal
Lorna Welch, Trustee
Jessie Smith, Trustee
Carol Donaldson, Trustee
Dave Wells, President, Vancouver Island West Teachers' Union
Anne LeBeau, Special Education Consultant

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

Captain Meares Elementary Secondary
Gold River Secondary
Kyuquot Elementary Secondary School
Ray Watkins Elementary
Zeballos Elementary Secondary School

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.

Observations

- Literacy is a focus in the district.
- Positive working relationships are in place to support success for each child.
- Some schools acknowledge the need for and are working on individualized programs.
- The use of evidence to inform instruction is at an early stage.
- Although clarification and streamlining are required, progress has been made in ensuring that the Accountability Contract reflects the work of the district to improve student success.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

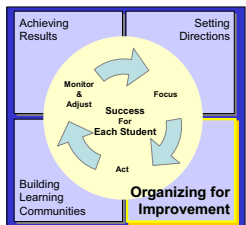
- Engage all stakeholders in the development of a strategic framework to guide the work in the district:
 - Clarify district mission vision and values.
 - Build a strategic plan with clearly defined procedures and processes to guide operations, assessment and instruction.
 - Use the strategic plan to address issues of sustainability at the school and district levels.
- Define success for students in Vancouver Island West and revise district goals to ensure a focus on areas of need that are shared and owned by all schools.

District Review Report 2007

- Use evidence as the basis for school and district planning actions and the allocation of resources to address needs:
 - Begin with authentic assessments for each student.
 - Expect the consistent use of assessment tools for learning tools, ie performance standards.
 - Create profiles for each student to plan, track, and measure individual growth over time.
 - Use individual profiles to build school profiles, and then to build a district profile.
 - Set targets for each student that reflect high expectations and ensure continuous improvement.
 - Clarify links between the needs of students and the work/actions of schools and the district.

- Establish clear directions to enhance success for Aboriginal students,
 - Complete the Enhancement Agreement.
 - Use the goals in the Enhancement to guide the work in each school
 - Emphasize sense of care and belonging for all students.
 - Explore the use of the connectedness tool developed by the Greater Victoria School District.

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

- There is a district focus on the provision of resources to meet the learning needs of students at each school. There has also been a significant investment in professional development for staff.
- There are some creative ways of organizing supports for students (psychologists, service and supports for students with special needs).
- Early learning programs are in place in some communities.
- The Team heard that local communities appreciate keeping K-12 schools/programs in each of the outlying schools.

Recommendations

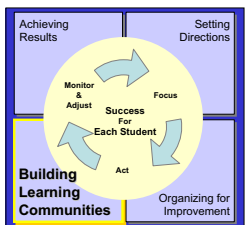
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Organize schools for success:
 - Using differentiated/individualized instruction.
 - Exploring nontraditional configurations (ungraded, timetable changes to address absenteeism).
 - Using DL to support learning, however, a focus on direct instruction for all core subjects is a priority.
 - Using technology to support assessment and instruction.
 - Using the document *Shared Learnings* to support Aboriginal culture in the curriculum.
- Complete and implement an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (EA):
 - Develop forums in each community to provide feedback about the EA.

District Review Report 2007

- Ensure there is shared responsibility for implementation of the EA by all stakeholders (ie. Teachers association, CUPE, principals' association, FN communities, parents, School Board Trustees, district staff).
- Monitor all actions for effectiveness and eliminate those that do not improve student success.
- Clarify operational processes and procedures to:
 - Inform staff of the rationale for staffing and allocation decisions.
 - Support the relief of the superintendent from financial duties to enable a strengthened focus on leadership for learning.
 - Explore shared services with other districts to support district directions and infrastructure.
- Focus on health and employment:
 - Connect with local employers to help students acquire skills they need for future employment.
 - Support students in making healthy choices related to nutrition, tobacco, drugs, and alcohol.

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

- There is an awareness of the need to reach out to the community.
- The commitment to students and their success is evident.
- There is a desire to increase parent involvement.
- There have been significant efforts made to build relationships in the last three years.
- Efforts to develop support Leadership development and capacity building have been made.
- There is an extended Kindergarten day and preschool provided at the local First Nations Band Office (Tsaxana).
- Professional development occurs within the district for school and district staff whenever possible, helping to maximize the number of people who can participate.
- There are strong examples of student leadership.
- There are examples of district efforts to move towards increased teacher collaboration for improving student literacy.

Recommendations

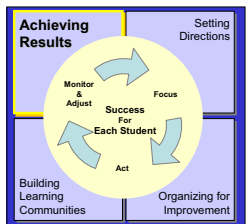
Initiate or build on efforts begun to:

- Explore the Appreciative Inquiry process:
 - To support and sustain positive relationships and growth in all areas.

District Review Report 2007

- To celebrate successes already attained.
- Use technology to consistently build and support lateral communication across the district for staff and parents.
- Seek unique ways to involve parents, recognize and celebrate their involvement.
- Enhance communication involving all parents, school staff, and community members.
- Recognize and celebrate the aboriginal culture within the district by:
 - Establishing welcome symbols at each school that reflect the culture of the students.
 - Creating environments that demonstrate a sense of care and belonging in each school for each child.
 - Building structures that consistently engage the local community.
- Begin using the goals and the direction of the draft Enhancement Agreement to build and embed a district culture.
- Leadership at all levels must take responsibility for the planning and actions required to improve the life chances of each child.
- Ensure that high expectations for student achievement, teacher and administrative leadership are clearly articulated and supported.
- Develop and implement programs to support social responsibility goals such as restitution.

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

- The work in Literacy shows promise, ie. adjusting structures to meet needs of students (eg. District VP responsible to support Literacy focus).
- The 2005/06 Dogwood Completion rate shows improvement.
- Observations from staff indicate the potential for future success as a result of the Early Learning Programs.

Recommendations

Initiate or build on work begun to:

- Improve transition rates, graduation rates and success for Aboriginal students.
- Monitor and adjust continuously to improve success for each child:
 - Define success for students in the district in addition to graduation.
 - Measure success by tracking and monitoring individual progress.
 - Provide support to help students develop a vision for their own future and explore career opportunities for students within the community.
 - Focus on early success initiatives.
- Explore the inclusion of consistent Aboriginal representation at the senior district level.

Conclusion

The District Review Team has considered the work of the Vancouver Island West School District to improve the success of each student. The Team found a strong commitment to improve student success. The significant work done to build relationship and the extensive supports provided to schools has the District poised to address individual student needs. Given the district context, the Team has concerns about the sustainability of improvement efforts however, the Team is optimistic that with a strong strategic plan and leadership distributed throughout the community the recommendations in the report can be addressed resulting in improved success for each student in the district.

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. 84.

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.