

District Review Report

School District No. 85 (Vancouver Island North)

February 28 - March 2, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By Team Chair
Michael Woods, Superintendent,
School District No. 50 (Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte)

**District Review Report
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District Name:	Vancouver Island North
District Number:	85
Superintendent:	Gilles Joubert
Date of Visit:	February 28 to March 2, 2005
Team Chair:	Michael Woods, Superintendent, SD 50 (Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte)
Team Members:	Ben Berland, Aboriginal Education Liaison Officer, SD 57 (Prince George) Steve Carlton, Assistant Superintendent, SD 34 (Abbotsford) Debbie Leighton-Stephens, District First Nation, SD 52 (Prince Rupert) Lori Tedrick, Parent, SD 06 (Southeast Kootenay) Sally Thicke, Principal, SD 46 (Sunshine Coast) Renee Wentland, Education Officer, Ministry of Education

Context

School District No. 85 covers a total of 8,655 square miles of the northern end of Vancouver Island. The District has approximately 2,000 K-12 students attending 14 schools (11 elementary schools, 2 secondary schools and 1 Elem./Jr. Secondary school) in Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice, Alert Bay, Sointula, Woss, Echo Bay, Quatsino and Holberg. The District's enrolment has been decreasing steadily over the past five years. This is due mainly to the downturn in resource based industries. Due to various factors, the School District has undergone significant fiscal challenges during the past five to six years. The Board of Trustees with staff and their various communities are working together to address this critical issue.

Forty (40%) percent of the schools are situated in areas that are separated from the main centers by either water or logging roads. These unique factors present interesting challenges for the School District. Based on the 2001 census, the North Island has a population of 13,100 people made up of approximately 80% non-Aboriginal and 20% Aboriginal. The School District's pupil population is comprised of 75% non-Aboriginal and 25% Aboriginal students.

In addition to the regular K-12 program offerings and in partnership with its First Nation communities, the District is operating two off-site alternate Junior Secondary Programs for First Nation students. In addition, there are two storefront Continuing Education Programs located in Port McNeill and Port Hardy. The School District has begun the Enhancement Agreement process. The formal Terms of Agreement were signed off in June 2003 with all First Nation communities. To date 12 focus groups, including student groups, have been conducted in collaboration with First Nation agencies on and off reserve. Plans are to sign the final agreement in Spring 2005.

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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 school 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 Team reviewed the District's Accountability Contract, Ministry data related to the District, Draft Enhancement Agreement, Special Education Handbook, Aboriginal Report–How Are We Doing?, Community LINKS Report and individual School Plans.

At the outset of the review, the Team met with district staff, the Board of Trustees and a number of educational leaders. The Team was provided with a comprehensive overview including a review of the District's Accountability Contract and summaries of numerous programs and initiatives. Following the initial meeting, the Team met with representatives from:

Alert Bay:	Alert Bay School
Port Alice:	Sea View School
Holberg:	San Josef School
Port Hardy:	Eagle View School Eke-Me-Xi Alternate School Fort Rupert School Port Hardy Secondary Robert Scott School
Port McNeill:	Cheslakees School North Island Secondary School Sunset School
Quatsino:	Quatsino School
Simoom Sound:	Echo Bay School (teleconference due to weather)
Sointula:	A.J. Elliott School,
Woss:	Woss Lake School

Aboriginal Community Representatives
District Parent Advisory Council

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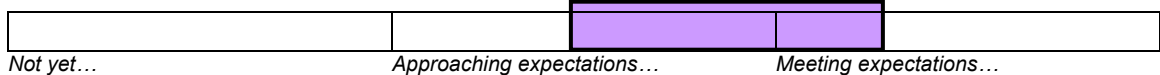
Discussion with each group focused on the 10 Points of Inquiry forming the structure of the District Review. The Team appreciated the thoughtful discussions and participation of parent, student, staff and community representatives. The Team noted the high level of dedication among all participants.

At the conclusion of the Review visit, the Team met with the Board of Trustees and the District Leadership Team to present a draft of the Review Report. The Team is thankful for the support it received from the District in completing the Review, and was impressed with the District's commitment to improving student learning, despite significant geographic and economic challenges. Further, the Team appreciated the professionalism and warm welcome it received at each of the school visits.

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*

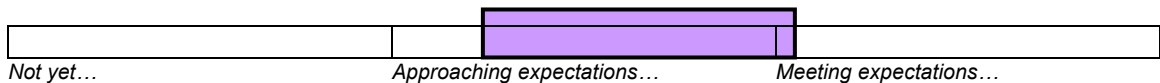
Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



- District goals and goals in most schools focus on student achievement.
- The District Accountability Contract addresses First Nation student achievement in literacy.
- Some schools with significant First Nation populations address the achievement of this group through effective use of personnel, programs and classroom strategies.

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.



- District goals are linked to evidence that support the goals.
- Some schools have clearly developed rationales based on evidence from multiple sources of data including classroom data.

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3. *Data:*

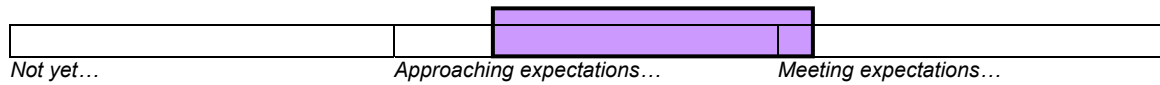
Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the district goals and is used to monitor progress.



- District and school goals reflect Ministry data (FSA, survey, examination), PM Benchmark and CTBS standardized testing data.
- Some schools have begun to collect data at the school/classroom level – DART (District Assessment Reading Team) and school-wide writes.
- Some schools have begun to use the BC Performance Standards to gather evidence of student achievement.
- There is growing evidence of analysis, interpretation and reporting of data.

4. *Strategies:*

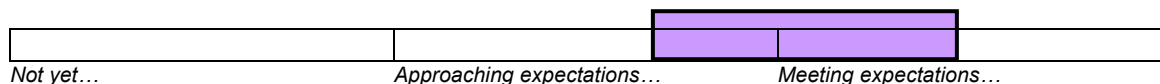
Improving districts and schools have focused, well organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



- Some schools are using research-based strategies that directly support student achievement goals.
- Some schools are focusing strategies on specific groups of students most in need.
- Strategies to address the needs of Aboriginal students are being developed and are in the process of being implemented. The work that has been done on the Enhancement Agreement will assist in this development.
- Some schools have yet to effectively articulate the link between school goals, chosen strategies and desired results.

5. *Structures:*

Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, and 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.



- Schools recognize the importance of structures and are using creative ways to align resources, time and organization.
- The District has begun to develop district wide structures to support and improve student learning. This includes established workgroups for each goal area: the District Workgroups (Literacy/Numeracy/Social Responsibility).

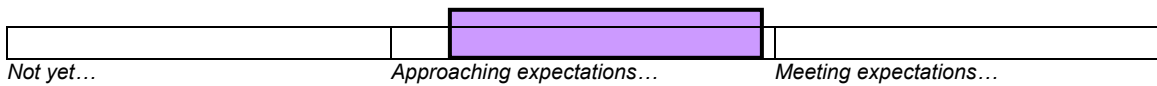
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- Schools are beginning to use promising programs intended for district-wide use including:
 - Math 44
 - Reading 44
 - DART
 - Virtues
 - Eagle Crest Books and other locally developed curriculum

6. *Results:*

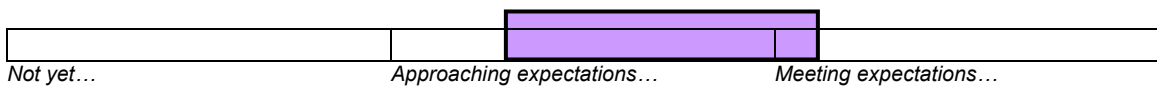
Improving districts and schools monitor and make adjustments to get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- Many schools are using multiple sources of data to report results.
- All schools and the District rely heavily on FSA and/or CTBS data for reporting results.
- Some schools are using results to inform instruction in the classroom.
- The District Workgroups (Literacy/Numeracy/Social Responsibility) have analyzed results and are using those results to develop strategies and structures to support 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.



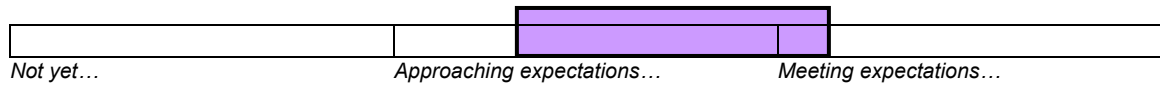
- As a result of the Enhancement Agreement process, there is evidence of increased effective communication and positive relationship building between the District and the First Nation communities.
- All schools use a variety of strategies to communicate with families, i.e. newsletters, phone calls, student-led conferences, informal conversations, and emails.
- There is a commitment to engage SPCs, PACs and DPAC in the dialogue about student achievement despite geographic challenges.
- Some schools have innovative approaches to communicating with their communities, i.e. administrators who meet parents and community members in local First Nation communities.
- There is considerable involvement of parents and community in many of the smaller schools.

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8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*

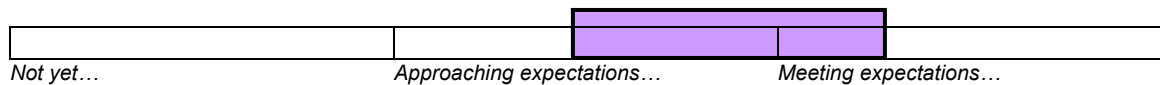
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued.



- The goals stated in the District Accountability Contract are aligned with most school goals; the connection between the District improvement plan and some school plans is not always evident.
- There is sufficient flexibility for schools to choose additional goals that reflect their unique needs.
- The District reinforces and supports aligned school goals, i.e. coordinated program planning, in-service, resource acquisition.

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement:*

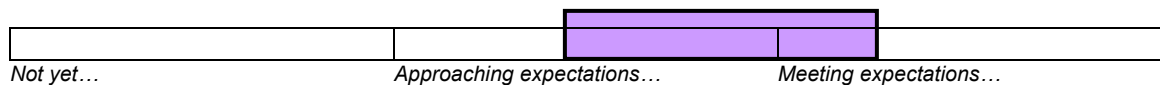
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- The District is actively participating in the Enhancement Agreement process.
- The District and the First Nation stakeholder groups are working in partnership to increase success for First Nation learners
- The District recognizes and supports the role of the DPAC.
- SPCs and PACs are very active and in most schools contributing to the school plans.

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.



- The District and the First Nations Education Council are developing an Enhancement Agreement through shared leadership to improve the academic success of Aboriginal students.
- The District is striving to build the capacity of leaders throughout the District. Examples of this include:
 - the Teacher Leadership Program
 - Student Councils
 - Lead Teachers
 - Teacher Experts
 - Student Led Assemblies

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- The District Workgroups (Literacy/Numeracy/Social Responsibility) have representation from all levels of the School District.
- There are many opportunities for parent involvement and leadership at the school and district level.

Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement:

- District Workgroups for each goal area (Literacy/Numeracy/Social Responsibility)
- Relationship with First Nation Communities
- The District recognizes the importance of DPAC and encourages its ongoing growth and development
- Parent involvement at the school level
- First Nation Education Council leadership in education for all students
- School Plan consultation and approval process to District (requirements checklist, Board presentation)
- Ethno-Botany studies, salmonid enhancement studies
- Participation in Island Net
- Port Hardy Secondary School First Nation Counselor
- First Nation Education Agreement consultation process
- The District has made a commitment to their small schools as being essential to the education of students in these isolated areas
- Communication through media, including student developed newspapers, i.e. *The Wailer, Quatsino Telegraph, NISS View*
- Big House Programs for all students, staff and community
- Port Hardy Secondary School First Nation support room (Maggie's Room)
- Healthy food programs

Promising Practices

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

- The successful program structure for First Nation students in Grade 9 and 10 alternate education programs (of particular note is the Eke Me Xi School).
- School developed organization and communication strategy - Bear Books
- Student Behavior Tracking Database
- First Nation Parent Club
- First Nation Early Literacy Program
- Grandparent Council and Grandparent Program
- Administration /parent meetings in home communities
- Family Groupings are used to resolve student issues and build relationships

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Recommendations

The Team respectfully makes the following recommendations for strengthening school and district focus on student achievement:

- Use of a balanced district assessment model with authentic classroom assessments of reading, writing, social responsibility and numeracy based on the Performance Standards
- Develop more specific district-wide standards and targets for student achievement at the school level
- Develop a balanced literacy model for district wide implementation
- Work closely with schools to align their strategies to school goals
- Promote and support First Nations 12 in all secondary schools
- Encourage further effort to promote First Nation parent participation in PACs and SPCs
- Continue to partner with communities to integrate the rich, deep cultural resources available locally
- Continue to research and select best practices for First Nation programs, i.e. Family Literacy programs
- Promote the collective responsibility for achievement of Aboriginal students among all members of school community
- Consider the integration of aboriginal achievement goals from Enhancement Agreement (DRAFT) into Accountability Contract
- Continue to support and promote the role of DPAC
- Consider inclusive consultation with all communities by making use of the successful approaches presently used for family involvement to include dialogue regarding student achievement and improvement plans and processes
- Continue to explore options, considering available resources, for outreach programs i.e. electronic school, web-casting and other structures that address school completion in rural and urban schools