

District Review Report

School District No. 39 Vancouver

May 30 - June 2, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Dr. Terrence Sullivan, Superintendent,
School District No. 73 Kamloops/ Thompson

**District Review Report
2004/2005**

District Name:	Vancouver
District Number:	39
Superintendent:	Chris Kelly
Date of Visit:	May 30 - June 2, 2005
Team Chair:	Terrence Sullivan, Superintendent, SD 73 (Kamloops/Thompson)
Team Members:	John Anderson, Superintendent, SD 37 (Delta) Michael Audet, Director of Instruction, SD 33 (Chilliwack) Kristi Clifton, ELD Program Coordinator (Teacher), SD 52 (Prince Rupert) Marie-Claude Collins, Principal, SD 93 (Conseil scolaire francophone) Stan Corfe, Parent, SD 35 (Langley) Rick Fabbro, Assistant Superintendent, SD 36 (Surrey) Kevin Godden, Assistant Superintendent, SD 34 (Abbotsford) Lindy Jones, Assistant Superintendent, SD 42 (Maple Ridge- Pitt Meadows) Dameon Lorensen, Teacher, SD 35 (Langley) Mike Malfesi, Principal, SD 75 (Mission) Claudia Roch, Lead Director, Accountability Department, Ministry of Education Trish Rosborough, Director Aboriginal Education Enhancements, Ministry of Education Carolynn Schmor, Teacher, SD 75 (Mission) Clara Sulz, Director of Instruction, SD 23 (Central Okanagan)

Context

School District No. 39 (Vancouver) is the second largest school district in British Columbia, with a student population of approximately 57,000 and an additional 8,000 students in the adult education program. Of the total student population, 14,911 (24%) are identified as having English as a Second Language (ESL) designation and 3,440 students (6%) are in French Immersion programs. Students speaking a language other than English at home make up 61% of the total enrollment. The District has identified 110 different languages among its school communities. There are 2,000 Aboriginal students, representing 3.5% of the population.

The Vancouver School District is located in a large, urban and multicultural community that includes some of the most affluent and impoverished neighbourhoods in the country. This setting provides wonderful opportunities as well as serious challenges. The District reports that the spread of poverty among children and their families is increasing. As many as 12 elementary schools receive district funding as a result of an inner city school designation. In addition, 12 Community School Teams receive funding to help vulnerable children and 16% of students participate in a school meal program.

District Review Report

2004/2005

The Vancouver School District programs and services address extraordinary combinations of challenge, need, opportunity and potential in an environment rich in diversity. The District benefits from the involvement of highly sophisticated arts and recreational groups that one would expect to find in a world class city. The District has established partnerships with different cultural communities, the arts community, and various service organizations. In addition, the District provides many choices to elementary and secondary students, including Early and Late French Immersion, Mandarin Bilingual, Fine Arts, Gifted, and Montessori.

Summary of Process

The District Review Team met Sunday afternoon at the Vancouver School Board office with trustees, District staff, principals, vice-principals, teachers, parents, students and Aboriginal leaders. The Team appreciated a traditional Musqueam welcome and blessing. Superintendent Chris Kelly and Associate Superintendents Valerie Overgaard and Sonia Hutson, presented an overview of the district, it's context and the 2004/2005 District Plan.

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 learning;
- Determine the capacity of the School District to support schools in improving student learning;
- Make recommendations to the School District and to the Ministry about improving student learning; and
- Identify promising practices that might assist other school districts and schools in their plans to improve student achievement.

To this end, the Team visited 13 secondary and 34 elementary schools and enjoyed discussions regarding the Ministry of Education's *10 Points of Inquiry*. Participating schools were as follows:

Elementary Schools

- Admiral Seymour Elementary
- Britannia Elementary
- Carnarvon Elementary
- David Oppenheimer Elementary
- Dr. A. R. Lord Elementary
- Dr. H. N. MacCorkindale Elementary
- Ecole Jules Quesnel Elementary
- Edith Cavell Elementary
- False Creek Elementary
- Florence Nightingale Elementary
- G.T. Cunningham Elementary
- General Brock Elementary
- Grandview Elementary
- Lord Selkirk Elementary
- Lord Strathcona Community Elementary
- Lord Tennyson Elementary
- Mount Pleasant Elementary
- Queen Alexandra Elementary
- Simon Fraser Elementary
- Sir Alexander MacKenzie Elementary
- Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith Elementary
- Sir James Douglas Elementary
- Sir Richard McBride Elementary
- Sir Wilfrid Laurier Elementary
- Sir William MacDonald Elementary
- Southlands Elementary

District Review Report

2004/2005

- Henry Hudson Elementary
- John Henderson Elementary
- John Henderson Annex
- Laura Secord Elementary
- Tillicum Annex
- Trafalgar Elementary
- University Hill Elementary

Secondary Schools

- Britannia Secondary
- David Thompson Secondary
- Gladstone Secondary
- John Oliver Secondary
- Killarney Secondary
- King George Secondary
- Kitsilano Secondary
- Point Grey Secondary
- Sir Charles Tupper Secondary
- Sir Winston Churchill Secondary
- Templeton Secondary
- University Hill Secondary
- Windermere Secondary

On Wednesday afternoon, the Team members met with representatives from the First Nations Education Advisory Committee, the District Parent Advisory Council, the District Student Council and the Adult Learning Centres.

At the conclusion of the review, the Team met with the Board of Trustees, District's staff, and other representatives to present a draft of the report.

The Team appreciated the warm and positive reception provided by schools throughout the District during the review process.

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.

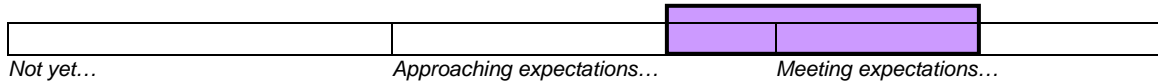


- In its Accountability Contract the District has established clearly articulated goals in the areas of literacy, social responsibility and Aboriginal student success.
- Most school goals are based on evidence and focused on student achievement.
- Literacy goals generally have a clear instructional focus and are based on evidence of student performance.
- Some social responsibility goals are clearly defined and based on school and district data.
- The District's goal for Aboriginal achievement is reflected in a few School Improvement Plans.

**District Review Report
2004/2005**

2. *Rationale:*

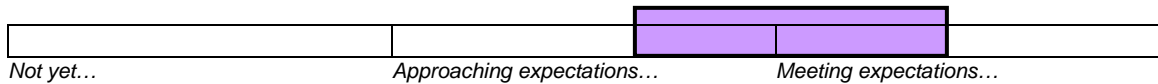
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The District's goals are supported by a strong rationale.
- Many schools develop improvement goals from a blend of school and classroom data.
- Schools involved in District literacy initiatives are able to provide thorough and connected reasons for the selection of their literacy goal.
- Most schools have a social responsibility goal that has a blend of anecdotal and observational data.
- Several schools expressed the need for continued support in using multiple sources of data to develop goals.
- Schools are beginning to disaggregate data for specific groups of learners.

3. *Data:*

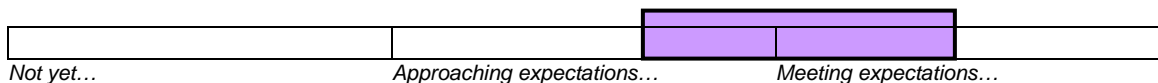
Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the district goals and is used to monitor progress.



- The District has used school, district and provincial data to inform the rationale in the District Accountability Contract.
- School communities are learning to select, analyze and use appropriate sources of data to inform their instructional practice.
- Schools consider a variety of data when reviewing student achievement.
- Some School Improvement Plans don't reflect the scope of data considered.
- Some schools are regularly examining data to monitor their progress.
- All schools consider classroom-based data.
- The District and some schools are developing instruments for gathering 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.



- The District literacy initiatives offer a strategic approach for schools to use in their School Improvement Plans.
- Schools demonstrate instructional strategies based on District initiatives.
- Many schools are using a research-based balanced literacy approach.

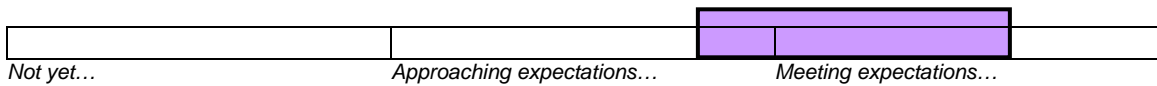
District Review Report

2004/2005

- The District has a Social Responsibility Team and most schools participate in the district staff development.
- Most schools survey staff, students and parents regarding their social responsibility goals.
- Schools are developing a common language to strengthen their social responsibility improvement goals.

5. Structures:

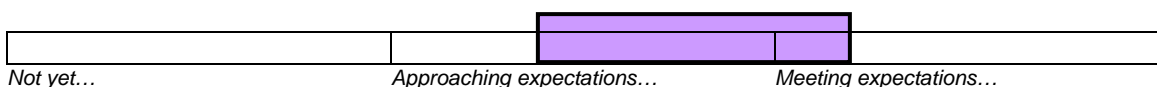
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, and organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



- The District has provided a variety of resources, programs and staff development to support school efforts to improve student achievement.
- District initiatives, such as the Early Literacy Project are proving to be key structures for advancing achievement. Staff development, resources and on-going mentorship flow from such initiatives.
- The District allocates additional resources to address areas of greatest need.
- A significant number of schools have reorganized schedules and staffing to facilitate collaborative planning, instruction and assessment.
- The District and schools have introduced a number of structures that foster the inclusion of all partners.

6. Results:

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



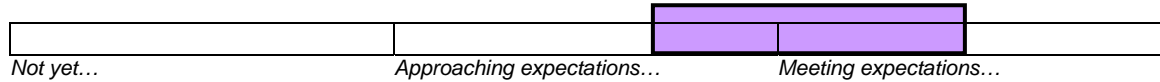
- The District has student achievement targets and monitors performance trends over time for each goal in its Accountability Contract.
- Schools are generally in the early stages of setting targets, examining trends over time, and tracking cohort groups.
- Some schools are at the stage of collecting baseline data for their improvement plans.
- Many schools are beginning to use data to make adjustments to their instructional practice.
- Many schools are searching for ways to measure student growth in the area of social responsibility.

District Review Report

2004/2005

7. *Communication:*

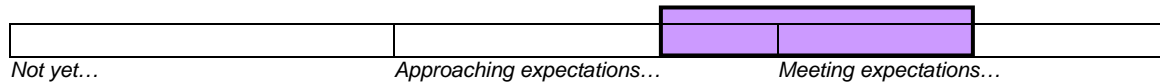
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



- The District communicates clearly its commitment to improving student learning.
- The District provides opportunities through networks for schools to communicate with and to learn from one another.
- Many schools use multiple strategies to communicate their goals to parents and the public.
- Some schools are searching for ways to obtain more input from their diverse parent communities.
- Some schools are beginning to communicate their goals to students.

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.



- There is a strong connection between school goals and the District's goals in the areas of literacy and social responsibility.
- The District's goal to have full and successful participation for Aboriginal students is not fully expressed within individual school plans.
- Some schools have developed plans that reflect their unique circumstances.
- The District has established a clear planning process for school growth.
- The District Review Team noted that there is momentum across the district for the school improvement process.

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.



- Many schools reach out in a variety of ways to involve parents in the life of the school.
- Parents expressed appreciation for the training provided by the District for School Planning Councils.
- Parent involvement in examining data and setting goals is evident in some schools.
- Schools vary in the extent to which parents are engaged in setting goals focused on student achievement.

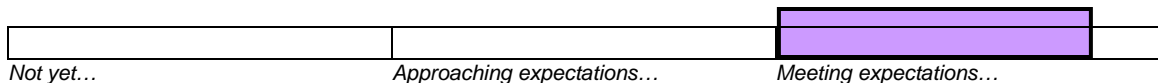
District Review Report

2004/2005

- There is evidence that some schools with diverse populations seek to involve all parent groups in the planning process.
- DPAC representatives expressed appreciation for being valued partners in the school district.

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 is showing leadership through a clear vision for, and commitment to, improving achievement for all students.
- The District has developed a "framework of inquiry" to define their purposes, roles and directions.
- The District provides leadership opportunities for administrators, teachers, parents, and students.
- The District is training teacher leaders as mentors to assist schools in improving student achievement.
- Teachers provide leadership for some key District initiatives.
- Principals and Vice Principals support school improvement by providing time for teacher collaboration.
- School staff recognize the District leaders for their support, connection to schools and commitment to best practice and innovation.
- There is a strong commitment of teachers, support staff and parents to the school improvement process.
- The District leaders demonstrate respect for staff, parents and students and celebrate the uniqueness of individual school communities.

Strengths

The District Review Team notes particular strengths related to student achievement, including:

- the District Leadership
- a long-standing commitment to social responsibility initiatives
- Principal and Vice Principal leadership in bringing parents and staff together to focus on student achievement
- the strength and commitment of staff
- the District model of sustained staff development to achieve long-term goals
- the growing use of data to inform practice
- the Leadership Development Program
- the District Student Council
- partnerships with public agencies and businesses, and
- meaningful inclusion of stakeholders

**District Review Report
2004/2005**

Promising Practices

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

- Sister School Switch 2005, designed to unite students from across the District
- Family Literacy Nights, conducted for families in their own language
- the Elders mentor program
- the “unloading zone” program for parents
- the Neighbourhood Liaison Worker (“Parent Place”)
- the “Strategies for Learning” courses at the Adult Education centers
- Junior “K” program at some inner-city schools
- Snap Café – highlighting creative writing, music, poetry, and
- Aboriginal Gifts in Numeracy Program

Recommendations

To strengthen school and district focus on student achievement and improving results, the Team makes the following recommendations:

- schools with a significant percentage of Aboriginal learners include a specific Aboriginal goal or objective in their School Improvement Plans
- Aboriginal achievement data be disaggregated and analyzed at the school and district levels
- engage the Aboriginal communities to establish an Enhancement Agreement
- further develop the inclusion of parents in setting goals for school improvement
- provide guidance to schools in selecting or developing assessments that will generate meaningful data for goal setting, and
- provide further training for School Planning Councils