

District Review Report

School District No. 75 (Mission)

February 26 – March 1, 2006

Submitted to the Minister of Education

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

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2005/06**

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| District Name: | Mission |
| District Number: | 75 |
| Superintendent: | Frank Dunham |
| Date of Visit: | February 26-March 1, 2006 |
| Team Chair: | Ron Allen, Superintendent, SD 5 (Southeast Kootenay) |
| Team Members: | Christine Barnhart, Coordinator, Ministry of Education David Coutu, Principal, SD 35 (Langley) Deborah Desroches, Parent, SD 39 (Vancouver) Ann Garside, Education Officer, Ministry of Education Janet Grant, District Principal, SD 40 (New Westminster) Lorrie Joron, Teacher/Counselor, SD 50 (Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte) Greg Ponsart, Assistant Superintendent, SD 38 (Richmond) |

Context

School District No. 75 (Mission) last received a District Review in 2002/03.

Mission is a rapidly growing and dynamic centre that is surrounded by the incredible splendor of mountainous vistas and natural forest settings. Mission lies only a few minutes drive north of the USA border, and approximately 70 kilometers east of the city of Vancouver. The District serves a student population of 7,068, plus 118 International students enrolled in 21 schools. Twelve percent of families are non-English speaking and 8.1percent are Aboriginal.

The District provides students' opportunities in comprehensive schools that offer a full spectrum of academic and career preparation programs. At the elementary level students are introduced to specialized courses in liberal arts. These are followed up at the secondary level with a breadth of specialized courses in liberal arts and science education, as well as providing paths to graduation for a diverse set of learners.

Along with providing strong comprehensive schools, the District is also proud of their alternate delivery programs, a Home Learners program and Riverside Trades, Training and Learning Centre.

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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, Aboriginal Education enhancement agreement (if applicable) 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 the Minister about improving student achievement.
- Identify promising practices that might assist other school districts and schools in their plans to improve student achievement.

At the beginning of the visit, the Team met with a district team of trustees, district staff and support teachers/administrators to listen to a presentation outlining the District's response to the recommendations from the previous district review and how they are supporting student learning. The Team appreciates the cordial and warm reception it received upon arrival and throughout the visit.

The Team visited all schools (including the District's alternate and trades programs) and met with School Planning Councils (SPC).

Meetings were also conducted with the following groups:

District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)
Aboriginal Education Advisory group
District Support teachers
Administrators of the Mission Home Learners program

At the conclusion of the review, the Team met with trustees, district and school-based administrative staff and representatives of the community to provide an overview of the District Review Report.

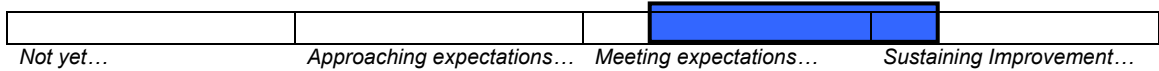
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Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. Setting Directions: Goals and Objectives

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

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|--|---|---|--|
| Goals and objectives have little focus on student achievement. | Some goals and objectives are based on evidence and focused on student achievement. | All goals and objectives are relevant, based on evidence, and focused on student achievement. | All goals and objectives are relevant, based on a range of evidence, and focused on student achievement. Goals and objectives are systematically reviewed and revised. Consideration is given to all students. |



- Goals provide a framework that supports an instructional focus on student achievement.
- There is evidence that goals and objectives are reviewed and revised to ensure a focus on areas of student need.

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2. *Setting Directions: Rationale*

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

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|---|---|---|--|
| Reasons for the selection of goals and objectives appear to be based on little consideration of evidence from data. | There is some evidence that the reasons for the selection of goals and objectives are based on relevant data. | Reasons for the selection of goals and objectives are based on evidence from a variety of sources and focused on student achievement. | Reasons for the selection of goals and objectives are consistently based on evidence from a variety of sources and focused on the achievement of all students. |



- The District and schools develop goals and objectives focused on student achievement derived from a blend of provincial, district, school and classroom data.
- Some schools provide a clear rationale for their selection of goals and objectives.
- Some schools consider specific groups of students when selecting goals and objectives.

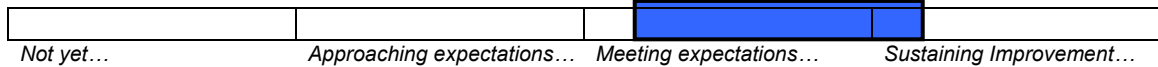
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3. *Setting Directions: Data (Evidence)*

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 objectives and is used to monitor progress.

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|---|--|--|--|
| It is unclear what data are used to determine areas of need and plan for improvement. | Evidence from data is used or beginning to be used to determine areas of need, plan for improvement, and monitor progress. | The district and schools consistently analyze classroom, school, district, and provincial data sources to determine areas of need, plan for improvement, and monitor progress. | The district and schools consistently analyze classroom, school, district, and provincial data sources to determine areas of need, plan for improvement, and monitor progress of all students. Data are disaggregated, participation rates are considered, and trends are tracked over time. |



- The collection of data is evident in all schools and at the district level.
- The District and schools are beginning to disaggregate data and are considering how best to use this information to inform classroom instruction.
- The District and schools are starting to track trends over time.

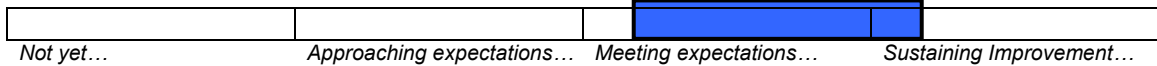
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4. *Organizing for Improvement: Strategies*

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

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|--|---|--|---|
| Strategies are not connected to school and/or district goals and objectives. | The district and schools have improvement strategies in place with some connection to goals and objectives. | The district and schools have practical, research-based strategies in place to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies link to staff development and other improvement efforts. There is evidence of monitoring and adjusting strategies as required. | The district and schools have practical, research-based strategies in place to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies are in place to address areas of highest need and link to staff development and other improvement efforts. The district and schools consistently monitor and adjust strategies as required. |



- The District supports schools in the development and implementation of strategies.
- All schools use a variety of strategies to support the achievement of their goals and objectives.
- Strategies are linked to staff development and other improvement efforts.
- Some schools are monitoring the effectiveness of these strategies.

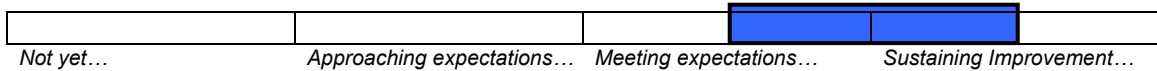
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5. *Organizing for Improvement: Structures*

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

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|--|--|--|--|
| The district and schools have not aligned structures to support school and/or district goals and objectives. | The district and schools have some structures in place to support school and/or district goals and objectives. | The districts and schools have structures in place to support school and/or district goals and objectives. Structures support areas of highest need and align with strategies. | The districts and schools have structures in place to support school and/or district goals and objectives. Structures support the areas of highest need and align with strategies. Structures are consistently monitored and adjusted as required. |



- The District and schools have implemented many innovative structures which align with strategies to support the goals and objectives.
- Some schools are monitoring the effectiveness of these structures.

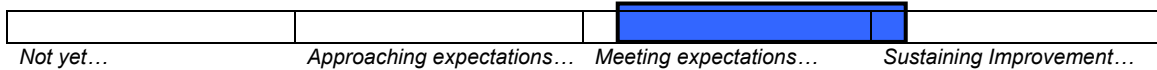
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6. Organizing for Improvement: Coherence/Alignment

In improving districts, there is a connection between school and district goals and objectives. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued. Schools connect with other schools to build capacity.

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|---|--|--|--|
| There is little connection between school and district plans, and there is little evidence of efforts to develop connections. | The district and schools are developing connections between school and district plans. | Connections between the district and schools are interactive and reflect both school uniqueness and district directions. | Connections between the district and schools are interactive and reflect both school uniqueness and district directions. Schools connect with other schools to build capacity. |



- A positive dynamic exists which values both school uniqueness and district direction.
- Schools, with district support, have the latitude to reflect their unique needs through their goals and objectives.

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7. *Building Learning Communities: Dialogue and Communication*

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

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|---|---|---|--|
| There is no consistent approach to communicating about student achievement. | The district and schools communicate about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made. | The district and schools communicate in multiple ways about improving student achievement. There are opportunities for dialogue, and community input is valued. | The district and schools communicate in multiple ways about improving student achievement. There are ongoing opportunities for dialogue, and community input is actively sought and valued. These practices are embedded in school and district culture and are sustained over time. |

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Meeting expectations... | |
| <i>Not yet...</i> | <i>Approaching expectations...</i> | <i>Meeting expectations...</i> | <i>Sustaining Improvement...</i> |

- The District and schools use a variety of ways to communicate the progress they are making towards the achievement their goals and objectives.
- Through our observations, there appears to be limited opportunities for community feedback.
- Although there is evidence of strong school and community relationships, there remains a need to find ways to enhance relationships.

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8. Building Learning Communities: Parent Involvement

Improving districts and schools work with all parents to improve student achievement.

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|--|---|--|--|
| There is little evidence of parent involvement. Few ideas are sought or heard in setting goals and working collaboratively to improve the achievement of all students. | Some groups of parents have a role in setting goals and working collaboratively with schools and the district to improve the achievement of all students. | Parents, individually and collectively, are actively involved in setting goals and are working collaboratively with schools and the district to improve the achievement of all students. | Parents, individually and collectively, are actively involved in setting goals and are working collaboratively with schools and the district to improve the achievement of all students. Efforts to engage less active parents as well as specific groups of parents are evident. Parental involvement is embedded in school and district culture and sustained over time. |



- Parents have the opportunity to be involved actively in the dialogue around student achievement.
- There is some evidence that the District and schools are reaching out to engage parents.

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9. Building Learning Communities: Leadership

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.

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|---|---|--|--|
| There is little evidence of collaborative leadership. | There is some evidence of collaborative leadership. | Leadership is collaborative at all levels of the system with a shared commitment to improving student achievement. | Leadership is collaborative at all levels of the system with a shared commitment to improving student achievement. Efforts to build and sustain leadership capacity at all levels are evident. |

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Meeting expectations... | |
| <i>Not yet...</i> | <i>Approaching expectations...</i> | <i>Meeting expectations...</i> | <i>Sustaining Improvement...</i> |

- There is evidence of collaborative leadership throughout the system.
- There are opportunities for leadership in all roles and at all levels.
- The District has implemented a district leadership program for teaching staff to develop administrative capacity.

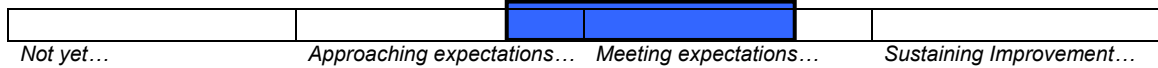
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10. Achieving Results

Improving districts and schools improve results. They monitor and make adjustments in key areas of student achievement – in classrooms, schools and the district.

| Not yet | Approaching expectations | Meeting expectations | Sustaining improvement |
|--|--|---|--|
| There is little evidence of monitoring results and adjusting to improve student achievement. | The district and schools are beginning to monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement. | The district and schools monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement. There is evidence of improving results. | The district and schools consistently monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement. There is evidence of improving results over time. |



- The District has developed an assessment framework for monitoring results and planning for improvement.
- The District supports schools in their efforts to monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement.
- There is evidence that some schools are using results to inform practice.

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Strengths

The District Review Team noted the following strengths:

- Continuing strong culture of care and support for students.
- District support for literacy and numeracy goals.
- The variety of opportunities available to students in the trades training.
- Commitment to Aboriginal learners.
- All-day Kindergarten for Aboriginal students.
- Active involvement of elders in supporting student learning and promoting cultural awareness.
- Community partnerships which complement and enhance the school-community relationship.
- Well-maintained and welcoming facilities.

Promising Practices

- WHIN-West Heights Inclusive Neighbourhood Project/MFSP-Mission Family Support Network Project
- Goal-setting day at the school level with parents and staff
- School Annual Report to Families that outline progress toward school's goals.
- Family Friendly Performance Standards
- Little Readers program
- Junior Credit Union program
- Excel Program

Recommendations

We respectfully suggest that the District consider:

- Supporting schools in their continuing efforts to make the monitoring of results and the use of disaggregated data a central focus in improving the achievement of all learners.
- Continuing to focus on improving student achievement using assessment *for* learning.
- Continuing to develop processes for monitoring the effectiveness of strategies and structures in supporting the attainment of goals and objectives.
- Supporting schools in their efforts to connect with other schools to share practices that enhance student learning.
- Developing more ways to support formal structures designed to elicit ongoing parental/community input and feedback.