

District Review Report

School District No. 37 (Delta)

April 18 - 20, 2005

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Bendina Miller, Superintendent, School District No. 6 (Rocky Mountain)

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District Name:	Delta
District Number:	37
Superintendent:	Dr. John Anderson
Date of Visit:	April 18 - 20, 2005
Team Chair:	Bendina Miller, Superintendent, SD 6 (Rocky Mountain)
Team Members:	Randy Cranston, Assistant Superintendent, SD 42 (Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows) Christine Dickinson, Principal, SD 54, (Buckley Valley) Dave Duerksen, Manager, Ministry of Education Jonathan Ferris, Teacher, SD 33, (Chilliwack) Ann Garside, Education Officer, Ministry of Education Craig Gillis, Director of Instruction, SD 72 (Campbell River) Arnie Kidner, Parent, SD 73 (Kamloops) Mike Munro, Assistant Superintendent, SD 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith)

Context

The Delta School District encompasses the communities of Ladner, Tsawwassen and North Delta. The area population of 100,000 residents is made up of about 25,655 families. Approximately 12% of the homes are non-English speaking and 1.9% of the people are Aboriginal including the Tsawwassen First Nation, the Musqueam First Nation and the Wilson Family and others living off reserve.

The School District is comprised of just over 17,000 students including some 250 International students. There are 10,000 children in 26 elementary schools and 7,000 students in 7 secondary schools. Included in these numbers are 2,000 students with special needs, 430 students of Aboriginal ancestry, 1,485 students in French Immersion and 220 students in Alternate Education programs. Enrollment is declining and is expected to continue to decline for the next ten years.

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;

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- Make recommendations to the school district and 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 reviewed the District's Accountability Contract, Ministry data related to the District and individual school growth plans.

At the beginning of the visit, the District staff, principals, parents, teachers and students involved in the District Steering and Writing Committees provided an overview of the contract and related data. Representatives from the Teacher's Association, Canadian Union of Public Employees and District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) also provided additional information. The District also hosted a Celebration of Learning in Delta where staff and students shared information about their practices, strategies and structures using visual displays. This overview provided the Team with an understanding of the unique features of the District, the current challenges and the passion and commitment of the District community.

The Team visited 24 schools and met with School Planning Councils in the following schools:

Annieville Elementary	Jarvis Elementary
Brooke Elementary	Ladner Elementary
Burnsview Secondary	McCloskey Elementary
Chalmers Elementary	Neilson Grove Elementary
Cliff Drive Elementary	North Delta Secondary
Delta Manor Elementary	Pebble Hill Elementary
Delta Secondary	Pinewood Elementary
English Bluff Elementary	Port Guichon Elementary
Gray Elementary	Seaquam Secondary
Heath Elementary	South Delta Secondary
Hellings Elementary	South Park Elementary
Holly Elementary	Sunshine Hills Elementary

Meetings were also conducted with the District Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, the District Parent Advisory Council, and the District Special Education Advisory Committee.

At the conclusion of the review, the Team met with the District staff, Principals, Trustees, partner groups and other interested community members to provide an overview of the District Review Report.

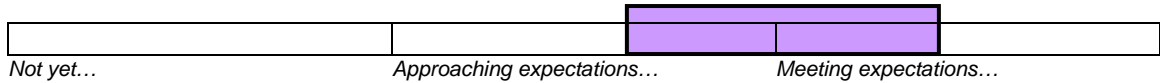
The Team experienced an open, welcoming and friendly reception throughout their visit and would like to extend its appreciation to the school communities and District staff. The Team would also like to express its gratitude for the detailed and thorough preparations that helped facilitate work and travel.

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Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*

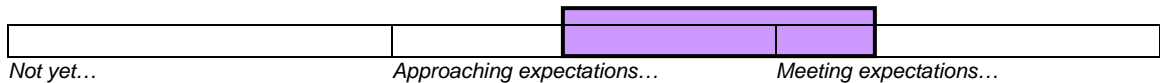
Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



- Some schools have written very effective, relevant goals based on evidence.
- Many schools are beginning to develop goals that are relevant.
- A few schools have goals for which there is limited supporting evidence.

2. *Rationale:*

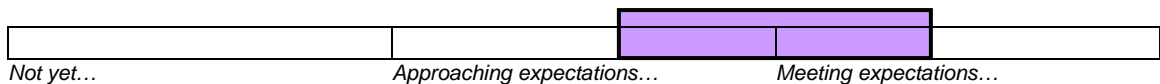
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The rationale for district goals is clear.
- A number of schools have goals based on evidence and student achievement.
- Other schools are in the process of developing rationale based on evidence from multiple sources of data.
- Schools need continued support in the articulation of the relationship between data, rationale and goals.

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.



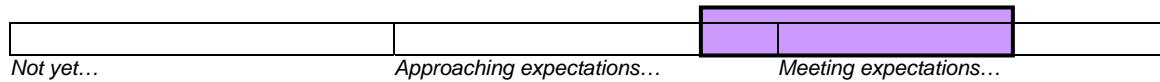
- Schools recognize and value the leadership provided by the District to support schools in acquiring and using data.
- A few schools have very sophisticated means of collecting and using data.
- Some schools are overly reliant upon FSA data to inform their plans.
- Visits to schools revealed that a variety of data sources are being considered by schools, including classroom data, but these are not always evident in school plans.

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4. *Strategies:*

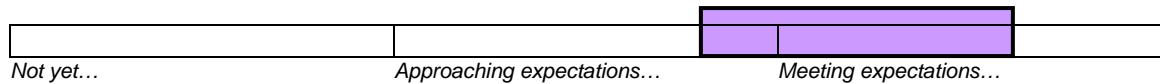
Improving districts and schools have focused, well organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



- Many schools have a variety of strategies to implement their goals.
- The District provides a wide range of supports to assist schools in meeting their goals.
- Current strategies are made available in a timely manner to all schools.
- Parents / Parent Advisory Councils provide significant funding and support to allow schools to access additional resources that promote strategies related to student achievement.
- A few schools have yet to match or align their strategies to their stated goals.

5. *Structures:*

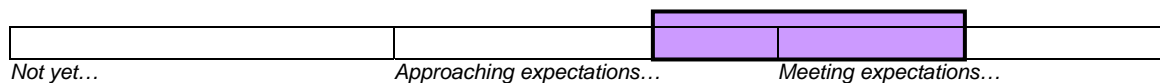
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



- The Team acknowledges the District's strong support for staff development.
- The District is to be commended for assigning a wide range of resources to the areas of highest need.
- Many schools are beginning to re-align their structures to focus on areas of highest need.

6. *Results:*

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



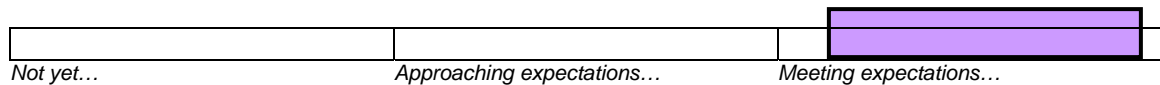
- The District monitors results on a regular basis and effectively allocates resources to support areas of greatest need.
- Some schools are consistently examining results and adjusting instruction accordingly.

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7. *Communication:*

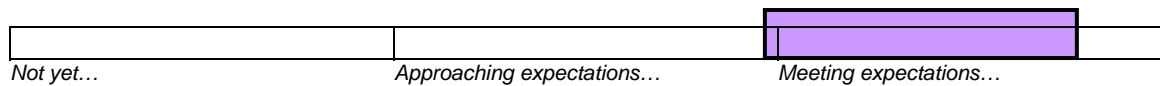
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



- The District has been very successful in its efforts to develop open and respectful lines of communication.
- It is evident that many schools also practice exemplary communication.
- Parents, Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) and School Planning Councils contribute to successful communication among all district partners.

8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*

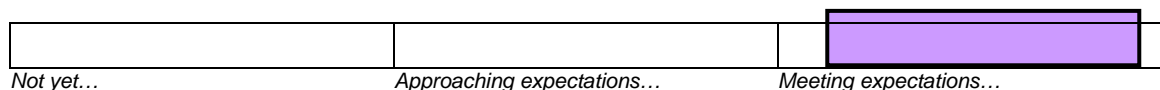
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued.



- There is an interactive process to link school goals and the District goals.
- School uniqueness in developing and creating plans is valued by the District.
- There is abundant evidence of active participation between education partners in the development of school plans.

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.



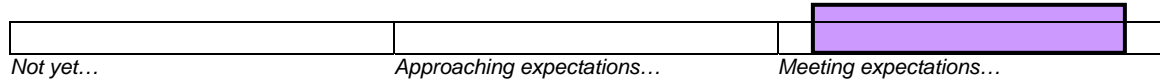
- Parents are active participants in the development of school and district goals.
- Parents value the opportunities to be included in professional development activities, focus groups and collaborative planning groups.
- Schools value and acknowledge the key role of parents in supporting student achievement.
- Schools, School Planning Councils and district groups recognize the District for its leadership in promoting effective training for School Planning Councils.
- The District and District Parent Advisory Council have an effective working relationship and both note the strength of the open communication practices in place.
- The District and Special Education Advisory Committee have developed a relationship focused on mutual commitment to addressing student needs.
- The District and Aboriginal community have an effective and growing working relationship.

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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.



- School staff and parents expressed appreciation for the strong leadership shown by District staff in their promotion of the District plan, school plans and student achievement, and the leadership provided by principals and vice-principals at school sites.
- Teachers assume leadership at the District and school levels in support of student achievement.
- Students are active participants in the leadership process and contribute to the attainment of district and school goals.

Strengths

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

- Open and respectful two-way communication among all education partners modeled by Trustees and District staff
- The commitment of teachers to provide expanded opportunities for students
- Leadership demonstrated by staff, students and parents
- The user-friendly nature of the District website
- Deeply committed and knowledgeable parents
- School Educational Initiative and French Program Educational Initiative grants
- School Planning Council training and the inclusion of parents in many professional development activities
- The recognition of Aboriginal programs and culture in the District
- District Youth Advisory Council
- Teacher Mentorship Program, including the Teacher Carnival
- Principal as Learning Support
- Kindergarten Readiness program implemented in conjunction with community agencies in four elementary schools
- Teacher Assistant Training program
- The District Learning Support Team
- Focus on meeting the unique learning needs of students through a variety of district strategies, structures and initiatives

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Promising Practices

The Team recognizes the following District and school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:

- Partners in Education
- Starting with Stories
- Stretch Programs in Math, Writing and Art
- Jarvis Math Project
- Noisy Reading
- North Delta Student Focus Group

Recommendations

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

- As the District is recognized for its high level of student achievement, it is an opportune time to narrow the focus to particular areas of student achievement
- Continue to support the District focus on 'assessment for learning' using authentic classroom data sources to inform instruction
- Continue to utilize authentic classroom assessment data to develop and monitor school and district goals for improved student achievement
- Continue to support schools in the analysis of data, development of rationale and writing of clear goal statements for improved student achievement
- Continue to focus on secondary instructional practices aligned with the goals to improve student achievement
- Promote further opportunities for schools to share preferred practices in collecting, analyzing and applying authentic classroom data