

District Review Report

School District No. 48 (Howe Sound)

May 7 - 10, 2006

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Candice Morgan, Superintendent, School District No. 69 (Qualicum)

District Review Report

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District Name:	Howe Sound
District Number:	48
Superintendent:	Rick Erickson
Date of Visit:	May 7-10, 2006
Team Chair:	Candice Morgan, Superintendent, SD 69 (Qualicum)
Team Members:	Judy Arnold, Director, Ministry of Education Allison Flater, Parent, SD 79 (Cowichan Valley) Ray Irwin, Director of Instruction, SD 81 (Fort Nelson) Michael Kee, Vice Principal, SD 44 (North Vancouver) Karen Nelson, Assistant Superintendent, SD 78 (Fraser-Cascade) Mary-Anne Smirle, Director of Instruction, SD 33 (Chilliwack) Terry Taylor, Teacher/Counsellor, SD 10 (Arrow Lakes)

Context

School District No. 48 (Howe Sound) last received a District Review in 2002/03.

The District includes Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton and surrounding areas.

Howe Sound is diverse and features distinct cultural and ethnic populations, specifically, a high Indo-Canadian population, as well as three First Nations communities: Squamish Band of the Skomish Nation located in Squamish and North Vancouver, Mount Currie Band of the Lil'Wat Nation located near Pemberton and the N'Quatqua Band located at D'Arcy.

The District serves an approximate student population of 4,300 students. Within the District, there are 11.6 percent students of Aboriginal ancestry, 30 percent of whom are living off reserve. The District is responsible for 10 elementary, 1 junior secondary and 3 secondary schools in the community.

The District began the process of establishing an Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement in March, 2005 and has a committee of approximately 30 representatives.

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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 was pleased to attend a dinner and presentation hosted by the Board of School Trustees where they were able to meet senior district administration; representatives from Howe Sound Teachers Association (HSTA), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and District Parents Advisory Committee (DPAC), principals and vice-principals, and focus group coordinators (e.g., Literacy, Social Responsibility, Early Success). Senior staff made a District presentation that used the Ten Points of Inquiry as a framework.

The Team visited all schools and met with School Planning Councils (SPCs). The schools visited were:

Blackwater Creek Elementary	Pemberton Secondary
Brackendale Elementary	Signal Hill Elementary
Don Ross Secondary	Spring Creek Community School
Garibaldi Highlands Elementary	Squamish Elementary
Howe Sound Secondary	Stawamus Elementary
Mamquam Elementary	Valleycliffe Elementary
Myrtle Phillip Community School	Whistler Secondary

Meetings were also conducted with the following groups:

- District Parent Advisory Council
- District Aboriginal Education Council
- Members of HSTA Executive
- Members of CUPE Executive

At the conclusion of the review, the Team met with the Board of School Trustees, SD 48 Education Partner Roundtable – Student Learning representatives and other interested participants in a public meeting to provide an overview of the draft 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.



- The District has two goals focused on student achievement and based on data.
- Schools have aligned their goals with the District priorities of Literacy and Social Responsibility. Schools are beginning to use relevant evidence to set goals related to student achievement.
- Based on their analysis of evidence, some schools are eager to develop different or additional goals to address the unique learning needs of their students.
- One school has identified a goal related to Aboriginal student achievement.

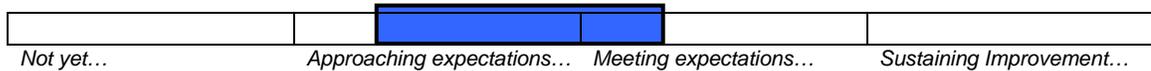
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2. *Setting Directions: Rationale*

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 uses provincial and district assessments to determine goals and objectives.
- Some schools are beginning to refine their goals using school-based assessment evidence. In some cases, decisions about goals or objectives are based on perceptions, interests or District direction rather than relevant evidence.
- Due to the recent adoption of assessments such as DART (District Assessment of Reading Team), many schools are in the process of collecting baseline data.

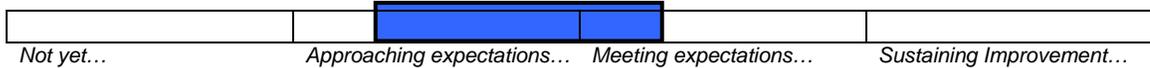
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3. *Setting Directions: Data (Evidence)*

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 District and a few schools are beginning to track trends over time and to monitor cohort groups.
- Many schools are collecting, but are not yet consistently analyzing or disaggregating, data to improve student learning.
- Some schools are beginning to use criterion-referenced classroom and school-level assessments, in conjunction with district and provincial data to inform planning and instructional practices.

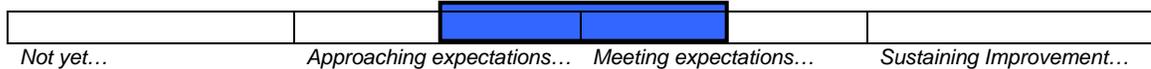
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4. *Organizing for Improvement: Strategies*

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.



- Many schools are taking advantage of District project funding to support staff development and to examine instructional practices and resources.
- Strategies, programs and staff development are linked to support goals.
- Schools are using performance standards; some are using the findings to inform instruction and monitor progress.
- Schools are beginning to implement research-based strategies and programs. As schools work from baseline data, they will be more able to adjust, monitor and refine strategies for effectiveness.

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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 has provided support structures for staff to collaborate on specific curricular or instructional topics related to school and district goals.
- Some schools are particularly creative in finding ways to provide unique opportunities to increase student success.
- Many schools are beginning to align their structures to support school goals and objectives.
- Some schools are differentiating structures.
- As schools begin to monitor results, they will be better able to differentiate structures and support areas of highest need.

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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.



- School plans are aligned with district goals.
- Some school communities are exploring ways to include goals that address unique learning needs.
- Some schools are working together on common topics of interest that support student achievement. In some cases, schools have identified further interschool connections to explore.
- The Secondary Futures initiative has set the stage for secondary schools to establish coherence and a common focus.
- Through the collaborative work of the Aboriginal Education Council, the District's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is almost complete. Once implemented, the agreement will be reflected in School Improvement Plans and the District Accountability Contract.

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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.



- The District and many schools have established a variety of communication links to their parent communities.
- Technology (e.g., email, websites, video-conferencing) is used to enhance staff and parent communication.
- A number of schools are finding creative ways to reach out to and involve all parents.
- A few schools have established two-way communication links that allow them to access parent and community input and engage in discussion about student achievement.

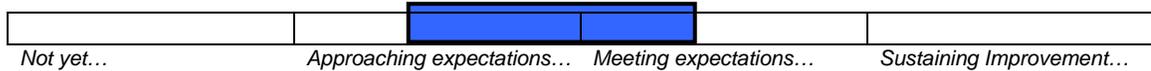
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8. Building Learning Communities: Parent Involvement

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.



- The DPAC is active at the district level and builds relationships to focus parent engagement to improve student achievement.
- Many parents are highly involved in a variety of ways to support their schools.
- Parents are welcomed as vital members of their respective SPCs.
- As parents, individually and collectively, become involved in deeper discussions about student learning, SPCs will become better able to identify and support specific evidence-based goals to improve student achievement.
- The Team noted the active involvement of the Squamish Nation Parent Advisory Council.

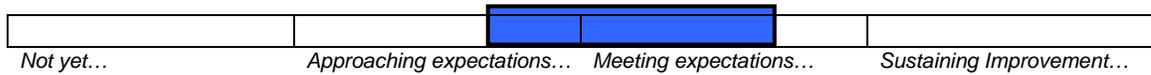
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9. *Building Learning Communities: Leadership*

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.



- The District leadership team has made significant efforts to focus on student achievement and is working to develop a shared commitment with schools. Examples include:
 - Education Partners Roundtable
 - Secondary Futures
 - Focus groups
 - Aboriginal Education Council
- Leadership opportunities for staff and parents are fostered and encouraged by both district and school administration.
- Teachers in the district take initiative and actively engage in leadership roles.
- Many schools encourage students to take on leadership roles.

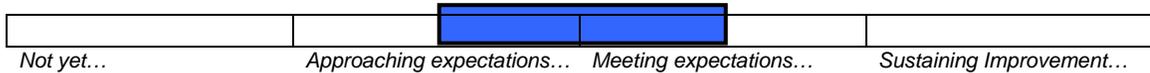
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10. Achieving Results

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.



- As the District enables the schools to refine their conversations about evidence and strategies to support student learning, student achievement results will continue to increase.
- Many schools report that they are at the beginning stages of monitoring results and adjusting practices.
- Based on results, some schools have developed strategies and structures to support areas of greatest need.

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Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths:

- Caring, respectful commitment to student learning
- Welcoming school environments in all district schools
- District commitment to address recommendations since last review
- Active involvement of the Aboriginal Education Council
- A thoughtful, comprehensive and inclusive process in developing the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement
- Active involvement of parents on Parent Advisory Councils, DPAC, and SPCs and in many other areas that support students
- Strong focus on early intervention
- Links between preschool-aged children, community resources and schools
- Creative ways of implementing supportive school-based structures
- Secondary Futures
- Focus Groups – particularly at elementary
- District Coordinators positions
- Effective community partnerships
- Effective post-secondary partnerships

Promising Practices

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

- SD 48 Education Partner Roundtable – Student Learning
- Secondary Futures
- Restitution
- District coordinator positions in a broad range of areas
- *Flex-ed* program to support students requiring flexibility in their education schedule including those involved in athletics or performance at a competitive level
- *Smart-risk* program
- Outdoor Recreation Leadership program
- Coordination with local post-secondary institutions
- Self-assessment School Review Guides

Recommendations

The District Review Team respectfully suggests that the District:

1. Acknowledge and celebrate the work that has been done since the last District Review.
2. Encourage a district-wide collaborative culture which values the processes and the conversations involved in developing annual School Improvement Plans and the District Accountability Contract as vehicles to make a difference for all learners.

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3. Revise the process to review school plans to one that is more interactive and that focuses the work to support student achievement and addresses areas of highest need. This includes the opportunity for schools to develop unique goals in addition to goals that align with the District.
4. Consider providing schools with additional opportunities to:
 - Continue to build a common understanding of assessment literacy.
 - Use evidence from classroom assessments, such as Performance Standards, to inform instruction and enhance student learning.
 - Expand the use of disaggregated and cohort data over time to identify areas of highest need. Use this information to address diverse student needs in the development of School Improvement Plans.
 - Support SPCs in their efforts to analyze evidence and to make informed decisions to improve student achievement (e.g., networking and further training).
5. Enhance and refine structures which differentiate between the unique needs of elementary schools and the unique needs of secondary schools.
6. Continue to broaden parent involvement in the work to improve student achievement.