District Review Report

School District No. 51 (Boundary)

May 7 - 10, 2006

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Robert (Bob) Peacock, Superintendent, School District No. 22 (Vernon)

District Review Report
2005/2006

District Name: Boundary

District Number: 51

Superintendent: Michael Strukoff

Date of Visit: May 7-10, 2006

Team Chair: Robert (Bob) Peacock, Superintendent, SD 22 (Vernon)

Team Members: Paul Carriere, Assistant Superintendent, SD 6 (Rocky Mountain)
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Context

School District No. 51 (Boundary) last received a District Review in 2002/03.

The District is located across the southern edge of the province on the BC and Washington border nestled between the Okanagan Valley and West Kootenays. Approximately 67 percent of the District is considered rural.

The District serves a student population of 1,742 students including those registered as Distance Electronic Learning students. Within the District, there are 969 elementary and 815 secondary students, 272 Aboriginal students, 35 students enrolled in low incidence/high cost special education programs, 44 students enrolled in the Severe Behaviour Program, and 135 students enrolled in Career Preparation programs.

The District continues to face the challenges associated with declining student enrollment and the impact that a fragile, primary industry-based economy has on the community. In an effort to continue to offer a full range of services and programs, the District has adopted a four-day school week. The adoption of the four-day week has resulted in the funding of programs targeted at early literacy and student achievement.

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, a draft copy of the Aboriginal Education enhancement agreement 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 district representatives including:
- Trustees
- District staff
- School based administrators
- A member of the local Teachers' Association
- A member of CUPE
- Members of the Aboriginal community

The Team met with the School Planning Councils (SPCs) of all 11 schools.

Meetings were also conducted with the following groups:
- District Parent Advisory Committee (DPAC)
- Boundary Integrated Services Committee
- District Literacy Committee
- Boundary All Nations Aboriginal Council (BANAC)

At the conclusion of the review, the Team met with district representatives once again to provide an overview of the District Review Report.

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.

Not yet…	*Approaching expectations…*	*Meeting expectations…*	*Sustaining Improvement…*
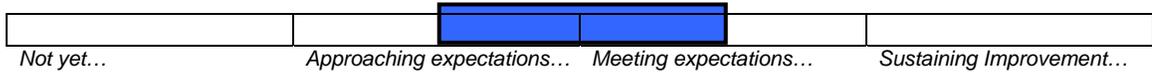
- School plans inform the District Accountability Contract.

- Most goals and objectives focus on student achievement.

- Goals and objectives do not always have a strong connection to evidence.

- Some of the objectives are too broad or are actually strategies or structures.

- There is limited evidence that the District or schools have considered the performance of specific groups of students.
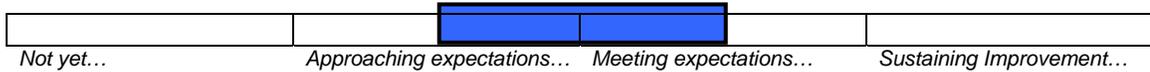
2. *Setting Directions: Rationale*
   Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals and objectives.

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.

Not yet…	*Approaching expectations…*	*Meeting expectations…*	*Sustaining Improvement…*

- A few school plans articulated a clear rationale for the selection of goals and objectives.

- Conversations with most school teams revealed the growing use of evidence based decision-making.

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.

Not yet…	*Approaching expectations…*	*Meeting expectations…*	*Sustaining Improvement…*

- Schools value the SMART Learning 'framework' and the use of BC Performance Standards in assessing and supporting student achievement.

- This year, schools and the District have begun to systematically collect disaggregated data, which will allow them to analyze the needs of specific groups of students. This needs to be an ongoing and timely process.

- While school plans reflect a heavy reliance on FSA data, in practice most schools are now considering three sources of evidence as they plan for improving student achievement.

- Some school plans do not accurately reflect the quality of work occurring in schools to improve student achievement.

- The use of a district-wide template has made a more consistent presentation of the evidence.

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.

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Not yet…	Approaching expectations…	Meeting expectations…	Sustaining Improvement…
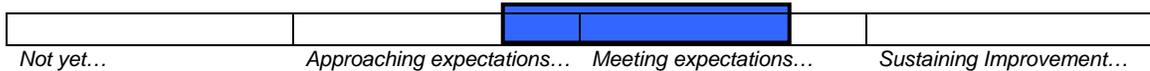
- The District has made a concerted effort to promote the growing use of SMART Learning strategies in support of the school and district goals.

- The Literacy Facilitators have developed a binder containing a tool for District-wide Read and Write assessments that will standardize literacy assessment (based on the BC Performance Standards).

- School-wide writes have been implemented across the district.

- There is evidence of the use of "assessment for learning" to guide classroom instruction.

- The District is in the process of establishing baseline data to enable it to monitor and adjust strategies.

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.

Not yet…	*Approaching expectations…*	*Meeting expectations…*	*Sustaining Improvement…*
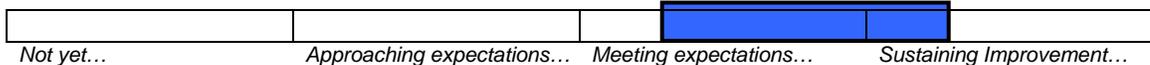
- By implementing SMART Learning, the District has established some key structures (Literacy Facilitators, on-going professional in-service and cross-school collaboration) which will build and sustain instructional capacity within the district.

- In addition, a few schools have innovative approaches that support student learning, such as Perley Early Literacy Program and English Dynamics.

- This SMART framework aligns with strategies that support literacy goals and objectives.

- The Team recognizes the District's ongoing commitment to the Boundary Integrated Services Model and the Boundary All Nations Aboriginal Council.

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.

Not yet…	*Approaching expectations…*	*Meeting expectations…*	*Sustaining Improvement…*

- With the predominant focus across the district directed to reading and writing, alignment between the district and school goals is evident.

- Schools value the District's recognition of their uniqueness while appreciating the directions set by the board and opportunities to collaborate in support of common goals.

- Following the submission of school plans, the District Accountability Contract is developed primarily by senior administrators.

- Formal processes by which the board engages SPCs and DPAC in dialogue about student achievement, and subsequently approves school plans, are not evident.

- The District is actively engaged with its Aboriginal communities in the development of an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

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.

Not yet…	*Approaching expectations…*	*Meeting expectations…*	*Sustaining Improvement…*

- Much dialogue is evident between the District, schools and partner groups: some of which is focused on student achievement. In particular, the open communication between the Aboriginal communities and District is to be commended.

- Parents across the district express that they feel their opinions are valued and concerns are acted upon promptly and respectfully.

- Schools utilize a variety of communication strategies to ensure partners are aware of improvement plans and progress towards goals.

- DPAC and the SPCs vary in the degree to which they are engaged in meaningful dialogue about student achievement.

- Teachers are actively engaging students and parents in meaningful dialogue about individual student learning. The Team noted examples of teachers using the BC Performance Standards in these conversations.

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.

Not yet…	Approaching expectations…	Meeting expectations…	Sustaining Improvement…

- Parent support for, and involvement in, school activities is evident throughout the schools.

- Student achievement is supported by parents in a variety of ways (eg., home reading program, agenda books, classroom volunteers).

- Schools are at various stages of dialogue with their parents regarding student achievement.

- SPCs vary in the degree to which they collaborate in the growth planning process.

- The DPAC is looking for opportunities to be meaningfully included in future district planning.

- The Team recognizes the District's challenges of engaging parents in somewhat isolated communities and the issue of sharing principals.

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.

Not yet…	Approaching expectations…	Meeting expectations…	Sustaining Improvement…

- Schools value the re-organization at the District office that has expanded the focus on student achievement.

- There is evidence of a systematic plan for developing leadership of administrators.

- Literacy facilitators in schools are key leaders in support of the literacy agenda.

- While parents clearly support their individual school activities, their involvement at the district level is limited.

- Some schools provide for and encourage participation in student leadership opportunities.

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.

Not yet…   *Approaching expectations…*   *Meeting expectations…*   *Sustaining Improvement…*

- There is a growing understanding and application of assessment 'of', 'for' and 'as' learning in the district.

- The Review Team saw considerable evidence of teachers, individually and collectively, routinely assessing student learning to guide classroom practice.

- Recently, the District has made significant progress in establishing district-wide assessment tools that will enable them to collect baseline data, monitor results over time and make adjustments to improve student achievement.

Strengths

The team congratulates the District for:
- Sustaining its efforts to effectively partner with community agencies and Aboriginal peoples to address the intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs of all students.
- Aligning structures and resources in support of district and school goals.
  - SMART framework
  - Literacy Facilitators
  - Trustee Initiative Grants
- Using the Reading and Writing BC Performance Standards.
- Committing to the completion of the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement.
- Encouraging parental enthusiasm and involvement in the schools.
- Recognizing their schools to be the heart of their communities.
- Providing PAC presidents with access to First Class.

Promising Practices

District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:
- The "Perley Early Literacy Program" which differentiates instruction focusing on the literacy needs of primary students.
- Supporting student achievement in curricular and participation in extra-curricular activities by providing an evening "Activity Bus".
- Supplementing communication to parents and the community through regularly scheduled public radio announcements.
- Using Ready Set Learn funds, the District offers "Mini Preschools" of six-week duration in their school-based Family Centers.
- Supporting teleconferencing to enhance the participation in DPAC.

Recommendations

The Team recognizes that the District has made a promising start in its work to improve student achievement. The reorganization of the District's educational team has allowed the **D**istrict to sharpen its focus; introduce key structures and strategies in support of district goals, and strengthen its assessment 'of', 'for' and 'as' learning.

The Team respectfully suggests recommendations in the following areas:

- Setting Direction
  - Continue to collect and organize data.
  - Support SPCs in their efforts to analyze and disaggregate their data to make evidence based decisions.
  - Tell your stories; provide training and support to SPCs to facilitate the development of clear and articulate school plans.

- Organizing for Improvement
  - o Consider developing a more collaborative process, which involves all education partners, for the development of the District Accountability Contract.
  - o Consider developing a formalized process for approving school plans.
  - o The District is encouraged to communicate and collaborate with DPAC, in supporting student achievement.

- Building Learning Communities
  - o Continue to encourage schools to network and share exemplary practices.
  - o Continue to identify and support opportunities for the development of collaborative and distributed leadership.

- Achieving Results
  - o Continue the ongoing process of collecting relevant data, monitoring results and making adjustments to improve student achievement.

In conclusion, the Team validates the direction that School District No. 51 (Boundary) is heading and encourages it to stay the course.