

District Review Report

School District No. 19 (Revelstoke)

April 2 - 5, 2006

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Keven Elder, Superintendent, School District No. 63 (Saanich)

**District Review Report
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District Name:	Revelstoke
District Number:	19
Superintendent:	Anne Cooper
Date of Visit:	April 2-5, 2006
Team Chair:	Keven Elder, Superintendent, SD 63 (Saanich)
Team Members:	Dana Arthurs, Parent, SD 79 (Cowichan Valley) Ann Garside, Education Officer, Ministry of Education Denise Laurie, Teacher, SD 20 (Kootenay-Columbia) Claudio Morelli, Assistant Superintendent, SD 41 (Burnaby)

Context

School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) last received a District Review in 2002/03. Located on the Trans Canada Highway adjacent to the Okanagan and Kootenay regions, Revelstoke is nestled between the Selkirk and Monashee Mountains. Revelstoke is a historic mountain community with a thriving population of 8,000.

The District is responsible for 4 elementary schools and 1 secondary school and serves a student population of 1,260 students. The District has a wide range of students with unique needs and prides itself on the support for and the achievement of these students, as well as on its strong partnership with community agencies and service providers. The District has experienced a significant enrolment decline over the past ten years, but has managed to maintain its focus on support for children and learning even as budgets have declined at a rate greater than that of enrolment decline. Also, in response to enrolment and fiscal challenges, as well, in the interest of offering a full range of programs in each school, the District has closed one school and is consulting with families, the community at large and the Ministry of Education on the proposed closure and consolidation of two elementary schools.

Approximately 10 percent of the student population is of Aboriginal ancestry, most of whom are non-status. An Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is currently being developed by the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee in order to meet the needs of these students.

The District employs 81 FTE professional staff (75 teachers, 5 principals and 1 vice-principal), 42 FTE support staff and 5 district excluded staff consisting of the Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, a district Vice-Principal of operations and technology, a district Executive Assistant and a Confidential Secretary. In addition, the District has a full contingent of support staff, including a district counselor/elementary behaviour intervention specialist; a school psychologist; a speech-language pathologist; a special education resource teacher (low incidence); a technology support teacher and a supervisor of Aboriginal student services.

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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 the Superintendent, representatives of partner groups, Principals of the five Revelstoke schools and members of the Board of School Trustees to receive a presentation/overview.

Members of the Team visited all five schools, those being:

Arrow Heights Elementary
Columbia Park Elementary
Mount Begbie Elementary
Mountain View Elementary
Revelstoke Secondary

The Team also visited the Secondary Alternate Program and the Farwell Learning Centre, which is resident to a number of inter-agency programs and support services including early childhood education programs, district support programs and college programs. Team members also met with District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) representatives, community partners and members of district support services staff.

At the conclusion of the review, the Team met with the Superintendent, Principals, representatives of partner groups, and members of the Board of School Trustees to provide an overview of the District Review Report.

The members of the review team wish to express sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality offered by the community of Revelstoke.

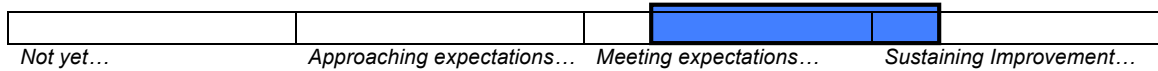
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Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

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 clearly defined, evidence-based goals and objectives supporting student achievement.
- Goals and objectives are reviewed and revised regularly at each school and at the district level.
- The literacy objectives incorporate specific student achievement targets for elementary-aged students.
- The adoption of consistent numeracy assessment practices will lead the District toward more specific objectives related to numeracy.
- The District and all schools have social responsibility goals and objectives that reflect a focus on increasing socially responsible behaviour at school and in the community.

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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.

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

- The rationale for selection of goals was clear for each of the school plans and for the District's Accountability Contract.
- Rationale included analysis of classroom, school, district and provincial achievement data, as well as professional judgment and feedback from surveys.

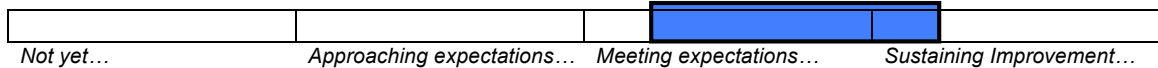
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3. *Setting Directions: Data (Evidence)*

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 schools have identified a wide range of data sources which are used to monitor student achievement in the areas identified within school plans and the Accountability Contract.
- The analysis of evidence from the data sources has been used to shape school and district plans and to determine appropriate interventions for students.
- While goals and objectives are reviewed and amended annually, evidence is analyzed as it becomes available in order to update the plans and adjust strategies.
- The District is tracking evidence over time and is beginning to systematically analyze more specific aspects of learning in order to address unique needs and plan strategic interventions. This type of tracked aspect analysis is already emerging for K-3, particularly in terms of aspects of reading.
- The use of evidence for planning at the secondary level is strong in the area of social responsibility, and emerging for numeracy.

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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.

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

- The District has implemented a large number of strategies in support of plans for improving student achievement.
- The District has brought in numerous programs in recent years to support improving student achievement, and schools are working to discern specific strategies within these programs that are contributing to improvements in areas of greatest need.
- Strategies being used to support improvements in social responsibility have been particularly effective.
- The District is anticipating success in the area of numeracy through implementation of strategies in the Math Makes Sense program and through continued support for math instruction at the secondary level.

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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.

<i>Not yet...</i>	<i>Approaching expectations...</i>	<i>Meeting expectations...</i>	<i>Sustaining Improvement...</i>
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- The District is organized in a way that maximizes resource allocations to structures that support students and learning.
- The list of successful structures includes:
 - Early and Late Literacy Committees
 - Numeracy Committee
 - Targeted Educational Assistant allocations
 - Team leaders in the secondary school
 - Partnerships with community agencies and organizations
 - Integrated Case Management Steering Committee
 - Consistent processes for collection, analysis and presentation of data
 - Implementation of Math Makes Sense for elementary schools
 - Behaviour Support services and programs

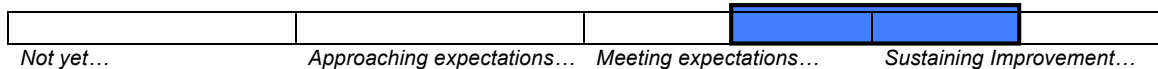
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6. *Organizing for Improvement: Coherence/Alignment*

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.



- The District and schools are operating from a common vision that focuses on improving student achievement.
- The schools, through their principals and staff leaders, take full advantage of their geographic proximity, their shared sense of purpose and their open and collaborative approaches to enhance learning and professional practice.
- The positive and respectful relations evident throughout the community contribute to the alignment of school and district goals.
- There is an alignment of resource allocation with declared priorities.

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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 the schools communicate regularly, effectively and through a variety of media regarding goals for improving student achievement.
- Surveys are used to solicit feedback from students and parents. Provincial satisfaction surveys are used with all Grades 3-12 and include supplementary questions.
- Surveys are used and feedback is valued.
- Community input is highly valued within the many effective partnerships among schools, the District and various community agencies and organizations.

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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.



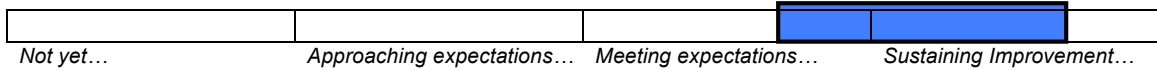
- The District has provided orientation and in-service for School Planning Councils (SPCs) and has clarified roles and responsibilities of SPCs through Board policy.
- There are healthy relationships between parents on the SPCs and principals and staff members, and there are ongoing discussions related to student achievement.
- Parents are engaged in evidence and planning discussions within each school through the school year. Parental involvement in the June/September development of school plans is limited to the SPC's receipt of a draft school plan prepared by staff. Parents reported that they have felt comfortable with the directions developed by staff, and that once the plan is endorsed they remain knowledgeable about the goals, evidence, strategies and results.
- The Team notes that for parents to be fully engaged, the District will need to provide for involvement of parents, alongside staff, in the analysis of achievement results and the formation of goals and objectives for the school and district plans during the June/September planning sessions.

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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.



- Leadership is clearly a strength, and capacity building is a priority for the District.
- The District and the community benefit from exceptionally strong leadership from the Superintendent of Schools.
- School principals are highly respected by staff, parents and students.
- Leadership is enabled throughout the district. As stated by one staff member, "Initiative is encouraged; ideas come to fruition."
- Student leadership is a strength in all schools.

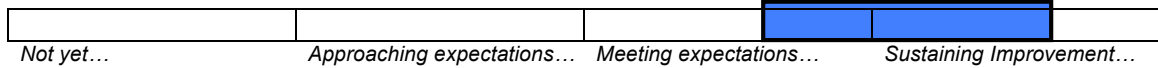
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10. Achieving Results

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 and schools are thorough and effective in their ongoing use of evidence to plan for improved student achievement.
- Student level interventions and adjustments to professional practice are both supported through monitoring of results.
- With the exception of numeracy, where assessment measures are being piloted or developed, there is evidence of improving results in district and school goal areas.
- It will be important for the District and schools to continue to monitor results, and refine strategies, structures and assessment practices in all goal areas.

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Strengths

The Team commends the District for the following strengths:

- The District, like the entire community of Revelstoke, is focused on the well-being of their children.
- There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect throughout the District.
- The District is characterized by a culture of collaboration.
- The attention to social responsibility in the District has resulted in safe and welcoming schools, and a socially responsible community.
- The District has properly dedicated its efforts and resources to improving literacy.
- Teachers have provided strong leadership in the area of literacy.
- Education Assistant support is a valued component of the whole school community.
- Secondary programs are designed to support student success and connection.
- Positive relationships among the community partners and the District facilitate the provision of services and support to children and their families.
- The District and community epitomize the idea that “it takes a village to raise a child.”

Promising Practices

The Team commends the District for the following practices:

- The connections among the District, schools and community agencies all of which effectively collaborate to provide integrated resources and support to children and families.
- The expectation that all students will be successful, with a focus on ongoing intervention.
- Targeted Education Assistant support allocations reviewed periodically based on assessment data.

Recommendations

The Team respectfully recommends that the District:

1. Provide for involvement of parents, alongside staff, in the June/September analysis of achievement results and the formation of goals and objectives for school plans and the District Accountability Contract.
2. Consider extending the use of BC Performance Standards in support of ongoing assessment, planning for instruction, and communicating expectations to parents and students.
3. Support ongoing assessment of reading abilities for students in Grades 8-12 and the use of instructional strategies for reading across the content areas.
4. Continue to support professional development opportunities for staff and parents.